SOLUS CHRISTUS

THE HEART OF TRUE PREACHING

Proclaiming Christ Alone in a Pulpit-Filled World

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EDGARDO M. ALDE

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By Edgardo M. Alde

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Solus Christus: The Heart of True Preaching-
Proclaiming Christ Alone in a Pulpit-Filled World
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Dedication

To all pastors and leaders of evangelical churches who are deeply rooted in the Arminian tradition—this book is for you.

Throughout generations, the continuity of Christ-centered preaching has been compromised. The very essence of Christ has often not been at the core of their endeavors and labor. Instead, the message has been distorted and diluted in its presentation to the hearers. Consequently, there has been little conviction leading to repentance and belief; the message has remained superficial in nature and has failed to aim for the utmost glory of the Godhead.

This work is not intended to create divis ion among you, nor to introduce new doctrines, but rather to unfold the old and biblical concept of preaching—where the only desire is to lift up the name of Christ and to serve Him, grounded in a biblical perspective and practices, viewed through the same lens as those from the Reformation period. My aspiration is to see preachers center their preaching on Christ and His finished work, which has always been the true center of faithful proclamation. There is no season to the Reformation—it does not fade away with modern thoughts and philosophies. Advanced technologies will not silence it, and even the worst of sinners will still be affected by it. This happens when true Christ-centered preaching is practiced, grounded in conviction and the truth of the gospel. On the other hand, preaching can

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become harmful and dangerous if it is not guided by the Spirit in delivering His Word to the believers.

I hope this book, though small, will greatly inspire you to revive the forgotten way of preaching—even in the modern and sophisticated society we have today. I pray that the name of Christ will be the most admired name above all names.

Soli Deo Gloria.

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Acknowledgement

I want to extend my thanks to those who have been part of the accomplishment of this endeavor. First of all, to the Lord Jesus Christ—my constant companion and inspiration—who made this project possible. In times of struggle and confusion, His grace has been abundant, silencing my doubts and guiding me through moments of hard labor.

I also want to recognize the effort of my beloved wife, Rose, and my children, Jeru and Jay, who, once again, have quietly stood behind me, continually supporting me as I worked to complete this book. You are my strength when I feel weak and discouraged, helping me endure in the midst of struggles and weariness.

To those who show interest in learning the doctrine of the Reformation and who are willing to listen patiently—especially on the subject of the centrality of Christ in preaching and teaching—this book is specially offered to cyou. I hope that your search for clarity in doctrine will find its answer here.

And to those who have read my books Real Life in Christ and Reformed Truth for Filipino Churches, my heart is filled with gratitude. I hope that your life in the Lord will be further equipped for His name's sake.

Soli Deo

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Preface

Solus Christus: The Heart of True Preaching-Proclaiming Christ in a Pulpit-Filled World. There is a silent crisis in today's pulpit—a growing drift from Christ-centered proclamation toward man-centered messages. In many churches, the pulpit has become a platform for self-help strategies, moralistic lectures, or emotional hype. What was once a sacred desk for heralding the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ is now too often a stage for personality, performance, or pragmatism. The result is tragic: people leave with entertained minds but untouched hearts, inspired feelings but unchanged souls.

This book, Solus Christus, was born from a burden—a holy discontent with the kind of preaching that sounds spiritual but lacks the power of the gospel because Christ is no longer at its center. The Latin phrase Solus Christus means "Christ alone," and it was one of the defining battle cries of the Protestant Reformation. It was a bold declaration that salvation is found in no one else, that no priest, pope, or religious work could mediate between God and man—only Christ, the one true Mediator, the eternal Son of God.

That Cry Must Be Sounded Again in Our Time.

We live in an age where distractions are many and convictions are few. Even within the church, the pressure to be relevant, popular, or culturally acceptable often

outweighs the call to be faithful. There is a temptation to soften hard truths, to make the gospel more palatable, and to shift the focus away from the Cross. But in doing so, we strip the message of its saving power. For it is not eloquence or innovation that saves; it is Christ alone.

Solus Christus is not simply a doctrinal slogan, it is the lifeblood of true gospel preaching. If Christ is not central, the sermon is powerless. If He is not exalted, the church is malnourished. If He is not proclaimed as the all-sufficient Savior, then what we preach is not the gospel at all.

As a preacher myself, I write this book not from an ivory tower, but from the trenches of weekly study, spiritual warfare, and the deep wrestling that comes with rightly dividing the Word of truth. These pages are the product of prayer, reflection, and a growing conviction that Christ must be all. I have failed, struggled, and learned—and continue to be humbled by the greatness of Christ and the sacredness of the task to preach Him faithfully.

This book is for fellow preachers, pastors, teachers, and believers who are hungry to see Christ magnified once more in the pulpits of our churches. It is for those who long not for clever techniques, but for deep, Spirit-empowered preaching that awakens dead hearts and strengthens weary saints. It is a call to return—not to tradition or novelty—but to Christ alone as the center and substance of all we proclaim.

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Each chapter will explore the theological foundation and practical implications of Solus Christus—how it shapes our message, reforms our methods, and fuels our mission. The goal is not simply to inform minds, but to ignite hearts with the glory of Christ, and to raise up messengers who will not settle for anything less than His exaltation.

To Him alone belongs the glory—yesterday, today, and forever. May this book be used, not to elevate the voice of the writer, but the voice of the Savior.

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Introduction

Is This a Pulpit or a Stage?

In our modern time, often called the information age, it seems that we lack nothing in terms of knowledge. With just a few taps on a cellphone, tablet, or computer, we can find answers to nearly every question—from the simplest recipe to the most complex theology. In this environment, it is undeniable that even the preaching of God's Word has been affected by the rapid tide of technology, entertainment, and digital amusement.

It is increasingly noticeable that some pulpits today are slowly turning into stages. The preacher resembles a performer, the message feels like a motivational script, and the goal is applause—not repentance. Some churches appear more like theaters than places of worship—designed to entertain rather than to draw souls near to Christ.

In the midst of this so-called information

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explosion—where people hunger for what is new, viral, and catchy—there is a real danger that we begin to equate the work of God with the trends and thrills of the world. But the church was not established to chase trends. The pulpit was not created to serve as a YouTube channel or a motivational platform. It is a sacred place where Christ is proclaimed—not man.

The aim of this book is to reassert the difference between the pulpit and the stage, and to return Christ to the center of preaching. In each chapter, we will weigh the content of modern messages in the light of the doctrine of Solus Christus—that Christ alone is our only hope, the true center, and our Savior.

We do not need a new show. What we need is a renewed zeal to preach Christ—clearly, powerfully, and lovingly. With the help of the Spirit, may true preaching return once again—where Christ is not an add-on, but the very message itself.

Constantine and the State Church

In the fourth century, Constantine the Great, emperor of Rome, reportedly experienced a vision before a major battle—the Battle of the Milvian Bridge. According to history, he saw a cross in the sky with the words, "In hoc signo vinces"—"In this sign, you will conquer."

Because of this, Constantine ordered the symbol of the cross to be placed on his banners and shields. He won the battle, and from then on, he became a defender

of Christianity. Under his rule, the Edict of Milan (313 A.D.) was passed, granting freedom to Christians from persecution. Eventually, he favored the churches, and even church councils were supported by the state (such as the Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.).

However, alongside these victories came a new danger: the church began to follow the power of the state rather than the Gospel. Christ was displayed in buildings, but He was gradually removed from the heart of preaching and the faith of many people. Christianity became the religion of the state—not just a matter of personal faith, but of culture, politics, and influence.

Connecting to the Pulpit's Condition Today

In Constantine's time, Christ was used to strengthen the empire's power. In our time, Christ is sometimes used to strengthen the preacher's influence, grow the church's popularity, or increase followers. This kind of crisis is not new. Even then, the name of Christ was used, but the content of the message was something else entirely.

Is this what happening in the pulpit today? That the name of Christ is in the slide presentation, but absent from the heart of the sermon?

We must ask ourselves: Is Christ truly the reason lives are being changed? Or are people simply moved by lights, by vocal tone, by emotion, by rhetorical skill? Because if it is not Christ, any transformation will be temporary—it will not be a true conversion.

In this work, we will give careful emphasis to the ruling principle of preaching, which rests exclusively on

Christ alone. True preaching finds its source, power, and authority only in Him. Apart from Christ, the pulpit loses its vitality and the message becomes distorted, reduced either to mere moralism or human inspiration. We will also examine the tragic consequences of preaching that neglects Christ, how it leads to spiritual dryness, misdirected hope, and ultimately a departure from the very heart of the gospel. By highlighting these realities, we aim to show that only Christ-centered preaching can truly edify the church and glorify God.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE CONDITION OF THE PULPIT IN OUR TIME

A Christless Pulpit in a Christian Age

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The Nature of the Pulpit in the Testament Period

The concept of a "pulpit" during the period of the Old and New Testaments was far from what we recognize today. In biblical times, preaching did not always require a fixed platform or formal setting. Instead, it was often conducted in a casual or spontaneous manner. Preachers during that period were more commonly itinerant than stationary; they moved from place to place, proclaiming the Word wherever the opportunity arose. Whether in synagogues, on hillsides, along roads, in homes, or by riversides, the gospel was heralded boldly without the architectural structure we now call a pulpit. In many cases, the preacher would speak from a simple table, a hillside rock, or even while standing among the people.

Unlike today, where formal attire, structured programs, and the physical pulpit itself are often seen as essential for order and reverence in proclamation, biblical preaching was marked more by urgency, authority, and Spirit-empowered boldness. While the forms were simpler, the substance was weighty. The sermons were deeply Christ-centered (especially in the apostolic period), rooted in Scripture, and often delivered at great personal cost.

Yet today, when we consider the modern pulpit—with its physical prominence in sanctuaries, its amplification systems, polished sermons, and time-conscious delivery, we are forced to ask: What has changed? Have we gained excellence but lost power?

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Has the formality of our pulpits replaced the fire of biblical proclamation? While order and structure are not in themselves wrong, we must reflect deeply: Do our pulpits still burn with the same passion for Christ, the same clarity of truth, and the same boldness of the early witnesses?

The Sacred Task of the Pulpit

Let me ask a sobering question: What truly is the primary task of this small, simple piece of wood, this pulpit, that stands at the center of our platforms? To the casual eye, it may seem to serve merely as a stand for notes or a symbol of tradition. But in the context of Christian worship, it carries with it a weight far beyond its physical simplicity. What benefit does it offer to the people? Is it merely a tool for convenience or an accessory to the architecture of the sanctuary? Or is there something deeper, something sacred, bound to its presence and use?

The pulpit is not merely a place from which a speaker conveys helpful advice, motivational thoughts, or even just religious instruction. No, it is the appointed station from which the living Word of God is heralded.[1] It is not inherently powerful in itself; rather, it becomes the chosen platform through which the Spirit of God

[1] See 2 Timothy 4:2; Nehemiah 8:4–8; Luke 4:16–21 — passages that illustrate the public reading and authoritative proclamation of God's Word.

convicts, transforms, and gives life[2]. It is not the wood that saves or sanctifies, it is the Word preached, and the Spirit who applies that Word to the heart, that brings about true spiritual change[3].

And yet, in our present day, a shift has occurred. Many come to church not to receive the truth that pierces the soul, but merely to gather information, facts, anecdotes, clever outlines. The modern hearer often desires intellectual stimulation more than spiritual transformation. When that becomes the dominant expectation, the pulpit risks being reduced to a podium for entertainment or education, rather than a holy desk for divine proclamation.

Christless Pulpit, Is a Tragic Pulpit

When the pulpit is filled with worldly expectations, it no longer functions as the throne from which God's voice is heard through His Word. It becomes a platform for human wisdom rather than the fountain of divine truth. But when rightly used, when filled by a man of God preaching the Word of God under the power of the Spirit of God, it becomes a mighty instrument, not because of its material, but because of its message.

Let us then recover the sacredness of the pulpit not in its external form, but in its eternal function: to declare

[2] John 16:8 showing the Spirit's role in conviction and transformation through the Word.

[3] Romans 10:14–17 emphasizing that salvation and sanctification come through the preaching of Christ, not the medium itself.

the glory of Christ, to confront sin, to comfort the broken, to awaken the dead, and to glorify God through the preaching of His Word.

Let Us Evaluate the Tragic State of the Pulpit Today

Many people cry at movies, are moved by songs, and laugh at jokes. But that doesn't necessarily mean they've been transformed by God. The same is true in the pulpit—there are messages that are funny, tear-jerking, and inspiring, but if Christ is not at the center, there is no real spiritual effect.[4]

The Gospel is not always "feel-good." In John 6, when Jesus preached hard truths, "unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood…"[5] many turned away and no longer followed Him. If Jesus' goal was merely to boost emotional morale, He would not have preached such things.

This statement is part of Jesus' farewell discourse to His disciples in the upper room (John 13–17), just hours before His crucifixion. In the midst of their confusion and sorrow, Jesus declared one of the clearest statements about His deity and role in salvation.

Truth has its own power, even when it's not shouted or accompanied by background music. Many preachers rely on the right tone, dramatic pauses, and background

[4] See 1 Corinthians 2:1–5, the centrality of Christ in preaching ensures genuine spiritual transformation.

[5] John 6:53–66, Jesus' teaching on the necessity of spiritually partaking of Him, leading to the departure of many followers.

songs to move the congregation. But the Apostle Paul said he preached "not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and power" (1 Cor. 2:4). If emotion is what brought someone to the altar, emotion will also lead them away when they no longer feel good.

When preaching constantly targets emotions, the church will be filled with Christians who are: Full of enthusiasm, but lacking in roots, fond of events, but averse to discipline, excited about revival nights, but lazy in Bible study. The true work of God is not just in the tears of the altar call, but in the quiet obedience of daily life.

The aim of the Gospel is not merely to change human lives, but to shape us according to the image of Christ. Christianity is not just about moral reform, social development, or self-empowerment. Its true goal is Christlikeness, that every heart may come under the rule of Christ.

Yet in many pulpits today, the message is man-centered, but when Christ is no longer central, the message becomes humanism, not the Gospel. The Gospel is not about how man can fulfill his plans, but how God fulfills His purpose through Christ.

There's a church known for motivational messages, leadership talks, and life hacks. Many attend and leave feeling happy. Why? Because the pulpit became a platform for self-improvement, not an altar of surrender to Christ. Listeners were empowered but not

evangelized. Humanism is centered on what man can do. The Gospel is centered on what Christ has done.

In this modern age, saturated with technology, social media, and information overload, Christ is slowly being pushed out from many pulpits. The message is shaped according to the preferences of the audience, not the truth of the Gospel. Instead of the pulpit being a channel of grace from the Cross, it becomes a stage for comfort, inspiration, and personal gain.

The purpose of preaching is not merely to improve behavior but to bring the sinner to Christ. Without Christ, no matter how "good" a person may seem, he remains dead in sin.

The popular message today is "you will be blessed" rather than "be holy." The Cross becomes mere decoration, not the center of the message. The focus is on what one can get from Christ, not on who Christ truly is.

Preaching has become like a sales pitch, enticing, tickling the ears, but lacking in power. This is not God's calling. A true preacher is not a salesman, but a herald of the Word of Life.

A man-centered message is dangerous. Christ is not the hero, the listener is. Such a message may boost morale but cannot save the soul.

The pulpit must not bow to the will of man, but stand firm in the will of God. Let us return Christ to the center of every sermon—for He alone is man's only hope.

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Christ Is Missing from the Messages

It doesn't mean Christ is in the sermon just because His name is mentioned. Many messages use the name "Jesus," but the substance and aim of the message are not truly Christ. One may preach about forgiveness, hope, breakthrough, or success—but if it is not rooted in what Christ accomplished on the Cross and in His resurrection, it is not the true preaching of the Gospel.

Today, many pulpits resemble large stages, full of lights, stories, and talent—but Christ is not the highlight. He is mentioned but not proclaimed. He is a reference but not the reality. It's not enough to mention Christ, He must be preached.

The tragedy is this: many leave church satisfied, inspired, and entertained, but they have not encountered Christ. The result? Strong emotions, but weak faith.

Four Ways Christ Disappears from the Pulpit

1. He Is Mentioned, but only as a Side Character

Many preachers today mention Christ in their sermons, but in truth, He is only a side character in the story. Like a cameo, briefly mentioned, but not central. The true protagonist is man: his dreams, his potential, his feelings. The message becomes humanistic rather than Christ-centered. The pulpit becomes a motivational stage instead of a place where the full person and work of Christ are proclaimed.

Sometimes, this stems from a lack of true knowledge of Christ. Perhaps the preacher has not truly

experienced regeneration. Or even if he has, the foundation of his faith may be rooted more in the power of human free will than in the sovereign grace of God. If so, it's no surprise that his preaching is also man-centered.

At the heart of some sermons may lie a quiet motivation: to make the listener feel good. The preacher avoids teaching hard truths. He avoids confronting the sinful heart. So, although Christ may be mentioned, He is not proclaimed as Lord and Savior who must be worshiped, obeyed, and served, but merely as a partner in achieving one's personal dreams.[6]

2. Christ's Kindness Is Preached, But Not His Cross

This is one of the most common forms of incomplete preaching: highlighting only the pleasant parts of the truth about Christ. His goodness, love, and mercy are preached, which are true and must be proclaimed, but the cross, His blood, and His suffering are avoided.

If only one side of the coin is shown, the message is not yet the whole Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is not merely about His kindness toward us, it is also about His sacrifice to redeem us. The cross is not only a symbol of love, it is also the proof of God's holy justice.

On the cross, Christ received the punishment we deserved. This means that God is perfectly holy and just, He will not let sin go unpunished. If a sermon is all about the "love" of Jesus, but fails to explain how that

[6] 2Timothy 4:3

love was revealed through the judgment He bore for us, it is lacking. That is not the true Gospel.

Therefore, the pulpit must proclaim not only His kindness but also His cross. For it is at the cross that we see just how good God is, that instead of punishing us, Christ suffered in our place.

3. Inspirational but No Call to Repentance and Faith

One of the saddest realities in pulpits today is the flood of inspirational messages that do not truly reveal Christ. They are full of stories, others' experiences, sometimes personal testimonies, and at times, they sound more like gossip or social media moments. When the goal of the sermon is simply to stir emotion and not awaken the conscience, the spirit of true preaching is lost.

The true Gospel does not only offer inspiration. It is a call to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ. It is not merely a message to give hope in times of trouble, it is a call to turn from sin and come to the Savior.

If there is no deep understanding of the Son of God, there will also be no true appeal to the sinner's heart. New birth does not come from effective storytelling, but from the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Word of God. Therefore, it is not enough to prepare an "inspiring message." The message must reveal our real condition, sinful, and the only solution: Christ crucified.

As Jesus said in John 3:14–17, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up…" The aim of every sermon must be to lift

up Christ, not the speaker, not the listener, but the Savior. For only in His name is there forgiveness and new life.

4. Christ Is Presented as an Example, But Not as Savior

It is true that Christ is our example, a clear command in the New Testament. We are called to follow in His steps, to make His life our standard, and to view Him as the measure of holiness. But the tragedy of our time is this: while Christ is exalted as an example, He is demoted as Savior.

His kindness is admired, but His deity is denied. His sacrifice is applauded, but the need for His blood for our forgiveness is rejected.

When personal happiness, desires, and freedom become the basis of life, Christ is no longer the model. The self becomes king. And in such a condition, the desire to lift up Christ slowly disappears, not only as an inspiration, but as Lord and Savior.

A Christless Sermon Example:

Title: Unlock Your Potential: Five Steps to Success

Sermon Outline:

1. Believe in Yourself –True success begins with trusting your own ability.
2. Set Clear Goals – Identify what you want to achieve and focus your steps on reaching it.
3. Maintain a Positive Mindset – Avoid negative thinking and replace it with positive declarations.

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4. Surround Yourself with Supportive People – The right community can help foster your growth.
5. Give Thanks Every Day – Gratitude opens the door to even more blessings.

Closing Words: Remember, you were created to succeed. Don't let your past hold you back. The future is in your hands. Let's pursue our dreams together!

Evaluation of the Message

1. No Mention of Christ: Nowhere in the entire sermon is Jesus, His sacrifice, or the Gospel mentioned.[7]
2. Man-Centered: The message revolves around human capability and potential, not on God's power and grace.[8]
3. No Call to Repentance or Faith: There is no invitation to draw near to God, repent of sin, or believe in Christ.[9]

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[7] John Stott, Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 84–85. Stott stresses that authentic Christian preaching must center on Christ crucified and risen, not on human advice.

[8] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Preaching and Preachers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 96. Lloyd-Jones warns against "man-centered preaching" which merely entertains or motivates but fails to exalt the sovereignty and grace of God.

[9] John Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 3.3.2. Calvin insists that true preaching calls sinners to repentance and faith, turning them away from self-reliance to dependence on Christ alone.

4. Motivational Speech, Not the Gospel: While the sermon may inspire, it cannot save.[10]

Message from Charles Spurgeon:

"A sermon without Christ is like bread without flour. No Christ in your sermon, sir? Then go home, and never preach again until you have something worth preaching." True preaching does not merely inspire—it saves. Without Christ at the center of the message, it has no power to transform lives.

Biblical Reminders:

Preach the Word of God, Not Human Wisdom

"Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." 2 Timothy 4:2 Preaching must be rooted in the Word of God, not in personal opinions or worldly desires.

Christ Must Be the Center of the Message

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" 1 Corinthians 2:2. Every sermon should be centered on Christ and His redemptive work on the cross.

[10] Charles H. Spurgeon, The Soul Winner (Pasadena: Pilgrim Publications, 1990), 15. Spurgeon argues that it is only the gospel, not mere moral exhortation, that brings about the conversion of sinners.

Beware of False Teachers

"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" Matthew 7:15. False teachers may appear good externally, but their intent is to lead people astray.

Don't Be Deceived by Flattering Words

"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passion" 2 Timothy 4:3. Many will seek teachers who say what they want to hear, not what they need to hear.

We Are Ambassadors of Christ

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God" 2 Corinthians 5:20. As preachers and teachers, we are representatives of Christ, entrusted with His message of reconciliation.

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CHAPTER TWO

PREACHING FINDS ITS FULLNESS IN CHRIST ALONE

Why Christ must be the Heart of Every Sermon

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The Meaning of Reformed Tradition and Solus Christus

The Reformation, which began in the 16th century, was not merely a rebellion against false teachings and corrupt practices in the church; it was a return to the foundational doctrines of the Bible. One of the most vital truths that emerged from the Reformation is the principle of Solus Christus: Christ alone as the exclusive Savior and the central figure in all things, especially in the preaching of God's Word.

The Reformers in the old days championed the truth that salvation is found in Christ alone. Solus Christus symbolized their protest against the distortions of the medieval church and their call to return to Scripture as the sole authority in faith and life.

In the context of preaching, the Reformation emphasized a crucial principle: every sermon, every message, every proclamation from the pulpit must point to Christ. Preaching is not simply about morality or life principles—it is about the finished work of Christ on the cross and His resurrection as the only way to salvation.

In this chapter, we will clarify the essence of Solus Christus and how it became the foundation of true biblical preaching. We will explore why Christ alone must be at the center of every sermon.

The Theological Foundation of Solus Christus in Preaching

Solus Christus means “Christ alone”, a powerful declaration that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man, and that salvation is found in Him alone. This is not a mere slogan; it is the very heart of the Gospel and, therefore, the core of authentic preaching.

Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:5, “For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” Preaching is not about life advice, it is about revealing the Savior. True preaching is not man-centered but God-centered, proclaiming the Incarnate One. If Christ is not the subject of the sermon, the Gospel is not being preached.

Solus Christus is a clear and powerful declaration: Christ alone is the center of God’s plan for the salvation of mankind. He is not merely a teacher, a role model, or a historical figure. He is the apple of God’s eye, the beloved Son, and the complete fulfillment of His redemptive purpose.

Yet despite this glorious truth, many pulpits today are lacking the radiance of Christ. Instead of proclaiming the power of the cross and the resurrection, listeners are often fed shallow stories, self-help advice, or moralistic legalism. Sadly, it is true: Christ has no place in many modern sermons.

This is a heartbreaking reality—that the Beloved of God is not recognized in His own community. As John

1:11 declares, "He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him." Our pulpits must be places where Christ is clearly proclaimed, exalted, and glorified. For He alone bore the wrath of God on behalf of sinners. He alone fulfilled the entire Law, died on the cross, and rose again to grant eternal life.

The message of Christ is not merely a part of preaching—it is its very heart. And God's highest purpose for you, dear reader, is that you would know Christ, love Him, and experience the power of His sacrifice. This purpose cannot be rightly fulfilled if Christ is not at the center of every sermon.

Christ as the Center of Every Sermon in the Early Church

Every Sunday, people come to church with anticipation, ready to listen, to hope, and to receive a message from God. Often, after the sermon, we hear people say, "Thank you, I was blessed." But the question is: were they truly blessed if Christ was not the content of the sermon?[11]

True blessing in hearing the Word is not rooted in emotional satisfaction, but in seeing Christ—the Lamb

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[11] John Stott, *Between Two Worlds: The Challenge of Preaching Today* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 99. Stott emphasizes that Christian preaching is authentic only when Christ is at its center.

of God who takes away the sin of the world.[12]If the message is eloquent but does not lead to Christ—it is pretense, not true blessing.[13]

Preaching that fails to draw the listener's heart to Christ is a wasted opportunity and a weakening of the soul.[14] If Christ is no longer explained, no longer taught, no longer glorified in the sermon—what is the point of attending church? What is the value of listening if the message does not bring us to the foot of the Cross?[15]

True preaching reveals the beauty, power, and grace of Christ. It brings life, faith, and hope.[16] Therefore, if the message does not reveal Christ, it is merely an empty

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[12]John 1:29 — "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" The true blessing of hearing the Word is encountering Christ Himself.

[13] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 124. Lloyd-Jones insists that eloquence without Christ is lifeless rhetoric.

[14] 1 Corinthians 1:23–24. Paul proclaimed Christ crucified as the power and wisdom of God, not empty words of human wisdom.

[15] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1960), 4.1.5. Calvin underscores that the church's gathering is meaningless unless Christ is proclaimed and believers are directed to Him.

[16] Jonathan Edwards, "The Excellency of Christ," in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1974), 680–681. Edwards describes true preaching as that which unveils the glory and sufficiency of Christ to the hearers.

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sound—and should not be rejoiced in by anyone who claims to be "blessed."[17]

As history unfolds before us, we see that the very essence of true preaching is found in Christ alone. After the close of the first century A.D., an astonishing movement began—one that sought to proclaim the fullness of what Christ had accomplished on the cross. This movement centered not on philosophical speculation or moral platitudes, but on the person and work of Jesus Christ, woven into every sermon, every teaching, and every effort to disciple the early Church. It was a pure and Spirit-empowered endeavor to exalt Christ and His redemptive sacrifice.

Among those who embodied this Christ-centered proclamation was Clement of Rome, one of the earliest Church Fathers and likely a disciple of the apostles.[18] His writings reveal a deep commitment to the authority of Scripture and the supremacy of Christ in all things. Clement heroically stood for the unity and holiness of the Church at a time of great internal strife and external persecution. His First Epistle to the Corinthians is not only a call for peace and repentance but a testimony to preaching that is saturated with the glory of Christ.[19] He

[17] Romans 10:17 — "So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ." Preaching without Christ cannot produce saving faith.

[18] Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History,* 3.4. Eusebius identifies Clement as the third bishop of Rome and a companion of the apostles, particularly Paul and Peter.

[19] Clement of Rome, *First Epistle to the Corinthians,* c. A.D. 96. This letter is considered one of the earliest non-canonical Christian writings,

pointed the Church back to the humility of Jesus, the obedience of faith, and the hope found only in the resurrection. Clement's life and ministry were marked by devotion, courage, and fidelity to the gospel.

Tradition holds that he was martyred for his faith—tied to an anchor and thrown into the sea—yet his legacy remains as one who exalted Christ even unto death.[20] Clement's heroic faith and unwavering commitment to Christ-centered preaching stand as a powerful reminder to every preacher: Christ must be the sum and substance of our message. It is only in Him that preaching becomes truly redemptive and eternally fruitful.

Let me add—not only in the beginning of the early centuries, but even in the unfolding chapters of Church history, we are met with another towering figure whose life and ministry proclaimed Christ with unwavering clarity: Augustine of Hippo. In the midst of the turbulent 4th and 5th centuries, as the Roman Empire teetered on collapse and heresies threatened the core of Christian truth, Augustine emerged as a faithful voice, drawing deeply from the well of the early Church Fathers. His

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emphasizing humility, obedience, and the supremacy of Christ.

[20] Tertullian and later sources mention the martyrdom of Clement. According to tradition preserved in the *Acts of Clement*, he was executed under Emperor Trajan by being tied to an anchor and drowned in the Black Sea.

theology and preaching absorbed and developed the apostolic tradition, and he became one of the greatest defenders of Christ-centered grace in the history of the Church.

Augustine was not only a theologian but a pastor and preacher, whose heart burned for the glory of God in the salvation of sinners. His sermons and writings radiate with the majesty of Christ as the only hope for fallen humanity. Through his Confessions, he gives voice to a soul that has tasted the bitterness of sin and the sweetness of grace.[21]His conversion was not just a personal transformation; it was a monumental declaration that salvation is not of man's will or effort, but of God's sovereign mercy. His central message was simple yet profound: "You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in You."

Augustine stood firmly against the Pelagian heresy, which taught that man could choose God without divine aid. Against this, Augustine proclaimed the doctrine of original sin and the necessity of irresistible grace—truths that would later fuel the Reformation itself.[22] In this way, Augustine became known as the "Doctor of Grace," emphasizing that everything in salvation begins and ends with Christ. His works, especially The City of God and

[21] Augustine of Hippo, *Confessions*, trans. Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

[22] Augustine, *On the Grace of Christ and on Original Sin,* in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1, Vol. 5, ed. Philip Schaff (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1994).

On the Spirit and the Letter, continually point to Christ as the Mediator, Redeemer, and the source of all righteousness.[23]

His life marks a bridge between the early Church and the medieval era. He preserved the flame of apostolic preaching by lifting high the name of Christ and exalting grace above human striving. Augustine is rightly remembered as a hero of the faith—not for establishing new doctrines, but for faithfully guarding and expounding the gospel of grace that had been entrusted once for all to the saints. He remains a voice through the centuries, calling preachers to proclaim a Christ who saves by grace alone.

Even in the 16th century, the pulpit echoed with the same climactic cry for the centrality of Christ. The Reformation was not merely a political shift or a reaction against ecclesiastical corruption—it was a revival of Christ-centered preaching, a bold return to the gospel of grace, and a reaffirmation that Christ alone is the Mediator between God and man.[24] The Reformers were not accidental revolutionaries; they were born for this advocacy, raised up by God in providential timing to extol Christ above all, even when it meant defying empires and enduring persecution.

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[23] Augustine, *The City of God*, trans. Henry Bettenson (London: Penguin Books, 2003); On the Spirit and the Letter, in Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 1, Vol. 5.

[24] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion,* trans. Henry Beveridge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008), 2.15.5.

From Martin Luther, who declared that righteousness comes by faith in Christ alone,[25] to John Calvin, who preached the majesty of Christ in every page of Scripture,[26] the Reformers lifted the veil that centuries of tradition had placed over the gospel. Their passion was not merely to reform the Church but to reclaim the pulpit for Christ. They restored the authority of Scripture (Sola Scriptura), but more importantly, they declared Solus Christus—Christ alone—as the center of all saving truth.[27]

This revolution came at a high cost. Many lives were staked on this truth. They were mocked, hunted, imprisoned, and martyred, all for the name of Jesus.[28] Men like William Tyndale, who gave his life so the common man could read the Bible and know Christ personally,[29] or Jan Hus, who was burned at the stake for

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[25] Martin Luther, *Commentary on Galatians* (1535), trans. Philip S. Watson (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 1:11–12.

[26] John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Galatians and Ephesians,* trans. William Pringle (Edinburgh: Calvin Translation Society, 1854), xvii.

[27] Michael Reeves, *The Unquenchable Flame:* Discovering the Heart of the Reformation (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2010), 89–90.

[28] Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), 278–280.

[29] David Daniell, William Tyndale: *A Biography* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 379–384.

proclaiming the supremacy of Christ over the pope,[30] stand as burning witnesses to a generation that treasured Christ above safety, reputation, or comfort. Their sermons were not tame. Their doctrines were not ornamental. Their preaching was a fire lit by the Holy Spirit to awaken dead souls to the living Christ.

In the storm of theological controversies and cultural upheaval, their unwavering message was this: Christ is enough. Christ is all. And for this, they suffered joyfully, knowing that to suffer for the sake of Christ is to share in His glory (cf. Rom. 8:17). The Reformation became a trumpet call that echoed from pulpits and prisons alike, testifying that the essence, power, and hope of preaching is Christ crucified and risen.

Contemporary Heroes of Faith Who Proclaim Christ Alone

In our generation, there are preachers, missionaries, and Christian leaders who have willingly laid down their lives—sometimes literally—for the exaltation of Jesus Christ. Whether through imprisonment, persecution, or death, they have not flinched. Their messages do not revolve around personal success or human-centered religion, but around the person and finished work of Christ. Like the apostles of old, they declare that there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under

[30] Schaff, Philip, *History of the Christian Church*, Vol. VI: The Middle Ages A.D. 1294–1517 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1910), 524–526.

heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12). Their lives echo the heartbeat of Paul: "I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2). In an age of compromise, these men and women stand as beacons of gospel clarity—proclaiming Christ alone as the hope of the world.

Here are some contemporary reformed preachers who preach Christ as the center:

John Piper – Founder of Desiring God Ministries, known for his Christ-exalting theology of Christian Hedonism: "God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him." His sermons and writings are saturated with the glory of Christ in all things.[31]

Paul Washer – A former missionary and founder of HeartCry Missionary Society. Known for his uncompromising preaching on repentance, the Lordship of Christ, and the true nature of the gospel. Washer calls people away from superficial religion to a deep, Christ-centered faith.[32]

R.C. Sproul – Theologian and founder of Ligonier Ministries, Sproul devoted his life to teaching the holiness of God and the sufficiency of Christ. He boldly

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[31] John Piper, *Desiring God: Meditations of a Christian Hedonist* (Multnomah, 1986).

[32] Paul Washer, *The Gospel's Power and Message* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2012).

upheld justification by faith alone and often said, "The issue of justification is life or death."[33]

John MacArthur – Pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church and president of The Master's Seminary. For over 50 years, MacArthur has preached verse by verse through Scripture, constantly pointing people to the glory of Christ, even in the face of cultural backlash and criticism.[34]

Richard Wurmbrand – A Romanian pastor who was imprisoned and tortured for 14 years under a communist regime. In prison, he continued to proclaim Christ, and later founded Voice of the Martyrs to support persecuted believers around the world.[35]

Helen Berhane – An Eritrean Christian singer who was imprisoned and tortured in a shipping container for refusing to renounce her faith. She remained steadfast and continues to testify to the sufficiency of Christ even in suffering.[36]

Timothy Keller – A pastor and author whose ministry emphasized the centrality of the gospel for both believers and skeptics. Keller often declared, "The

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[33] R.C. Sproul, *Faith Alone: The Evangelical Doctrine of Justification* (Baker, 1995).

[34] John MacArthur, *The Gospel According to Jesus* (Zondervan, 1988).

[35] Richard Wurmbrand, *Tortured for Christ* (Living Sacrifice Book Co., 1967).

[36] Helen Berhane, *Song of the Nightingale* (Carpenter's Son Publishing, 2009).

gospel is not the ABCs of Christianity, it's the A to Z." His Christ-centered approach shaped countless churches worldwide.[37]

These are the faithful ministers of the gospel—men and women who have given their all, even unto death, for the glory and exaltation of Christ. Their lives and ministries stand as enduring examples in a generation where many pulpits have grown cold, and multitudes are led astray through teachings void of Christ. In an age marked by confusion and compromise, where the gospel is often diluted or rebranded to fit worldly standards, these servants shine as beacons of truth, fidelity, and courage.

Their witness is not only a rebuke to the errors of our time, but also a compelling invitation for those who feel called to preach the Word. They remind us that the standard of faithful ministry is not eloquence, popularity, or innovation—but a clear, uncompromising proclamation of Christ and Him crucified. In this, the pulpit is preserved from corruption; it is kept pure from the mixture of worldly wisdom, self-help ideologies, and Christless sermons.True gospel preaching is centered in Christ—His person, His work, His glory. There is no other name worthy of exaltation. No philosophy, no trend, no preacher, no ministry style compares to the supreme beauty and sufficiency of Jesus Christ. The world does not need more entertainers or motivational

[37] Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God* (Dutton, 2008), The Prodigal God (2008).

speakers in the pulpit; it needs men and women with clear gospel lenses—those who see Christ as all, and who proclaim Him as the only hope of salvation, sanctification, and eternal life.

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CHAPTER THREE

THE UNSHAKABLE MESSAGE OF ALL AGES

The Eternal Centrality of Christ in the Gospel

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Everything that unfolded at Calvary was not random or accidental—it was all according to the sovereign plan and eternal counsel of God. Every detail of that historic moment, from the betrayal of Judas to the nailing of Christ on the cross, was already decreed and foreordained by God before the foundation of the world. The death of Christ on the cross was not a tragic misfortune, nor was it a desperate response to human sin. Rather, it was the fulfillment of a divine purpose—deliberately intended, sovereignly purposed, and eternally willed by God. As Peter declared in Acts 2:23, Jesus was "delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God."

Thus, Calvary is not only the center of history—it is the anchor of our hope, the foundation of our faith, and the assurance of our eternal destiny. This truth strengthens our confidence and assurance in the redemptive work of Christ. If His death was part of God's eternal design, then our salvation is likewise secure and unshakable. The cross was not a contingency—it was the culmination of God's gracious plan to redeem His people. Because of this, we can trust that the benefits of Christ's atonement are sure and unchanging.

The death of Christ on the cross continues to be a profound mystery—both to unbelievers and even to believers—when it comes to full understanding. For the unbelieving world, the message of the cross is either foolishness or offensive (1 Corinthians 1:18, 23). Many

never come to acknowledge the depth of God's love in giving His only Son because, first, they do not read or receive the witness of the Scriptures that reveal this truth. Second, their minds and hearts are darkened due to their total depravity—they are spiritually dead and alienated from the life of God (Ephesians 4:18). And third, they are enslaved by the power of sin, which blinds them to the glory of the gospel of Christ (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Even for believers, though our eyes have been opened and our hearts have been transformed, the full comprehension of the cross remains beyond our finite grasp. We cannot fully fathom the height, depth, width, and breadth of God's love that was demonstrated toward us, who were once radically rebellious and hostile to God (Romans 5:8, Colossians 1:21). Our faith affirms and embraces the truth of the cross, but our understanding remains limited by our humanity.

This is precisely why the cross of Jesus is considered the ultimate measure of our salvation. It is at the cross where divine justice and mercy met. It is there that the righteousness of God was satisfied and His love poured out. The cross is not just a historical event—it is the center of God's redemptive work and the sure foundation of our assurance. It reminds us that salvation was not cheap, but costly. The Son of God had to suffer and die in our place so that we might live through Him.

Thus, every time we look to the cross, we are reminded not only of how great our sin is but how much

greater God's grace is. It is the clearest and most powerful revelation of God's heart for His people.

One of Jesus' most well-known declarations is found in John 14:6:"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me."

This verse is frequently quoted in pulpits, evangelistic crusades, and sermons about salvation. And rightly so—Christ is indeed the only way to the Father. There is no other. This is not an opinion or a suggestion, but a firm declaration made by Christ Himself. Therefore, we must believe it, stand upon it, and live it out.

But over time, this verse has been reduced to a "religious citation"—a phrase easily spoken but rarely lived. Many claim that Christ is the Way, yet follow another. They profess Him as the Truth, but live in deception. They say He is the Life, yet show no evidence of spiritual vitality.

The tragedy is this: the declaration has become detached from real life. Christian faith is not merely information—it is truth meant to be lived. Yet in the daily lives of many, there is no trace of Christ's presence. There is no hunger for His truth. Instead, life is driven by personal desires, societal opinions, or feelings—not by the Word of God.

This is the fruit of spiritual ignorance—a kind of blindness brought by sin and neglect of true understanding of who Christ is. If we do not confront

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this, being "Christian" becomes merely a label—empty and powerless.

Moreover, the words of Jesus—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14:6)—take on even greater weight and meaning in light of the cross. These are not merely comforting statements; they are divine realities anchored in the finished work of Christ at Calvary. He is the Way because through His blood, the veil was torn and the path to the Father was opened. He is the Truth because in Him all the promises of God find their "Yes" and "Amen" (2 Corinthians 1:20). He is the Life because by conquering death, He gave eternal life to all who believe in Him.

This statement is part of Jesus' farewell discourse to His disciples in the upper room (John 13–17), just hours before His crucifixion. In the midst of their confusion and sorrow, Jesus declared one of the clearest statements about His deity and role in salvation.

The Story of Lee Strobel: From Doubt to Faith

In 1980, Lee Strobel was a successful legal affairs editor for the Chicago Tribune and a committed atheist. His wife, Leslie, had a personal experience that led her to embrace the Christian faith. Motivated by this, Lee decided to use his investigative journalism skills to disprove the claims of Christianity—especially the resurrection of Jesus.

For nearly two years, Lee interviewed various experts in theology, history, and medicine. He examined

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the evidence for Jesus' death and resurrection, including eyewitness accounts, historical documentation, and archaeological discoveries. To his surprise, he found the evidence compelling and credible.

Despite his intent to disprove Christianity, Lee's in-depth investigation led him to believe in the truth of the Christian faith. At age 29, Lee accepted Jesus as his Lord and Savior. His journey from doubt to faith is chronicled in his book The Case for Christ, which has inspired many who are seeking the truth about Jesus.

Lee Strobel's story is a powerful testimony that a sincere search for truth can lead someone to encounter and receive Jesus. It is a compelling witness to the power of the cross and resurrection.

Key Bible Passages About the Cross

1 Corinthians 1:18— "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God."

2. Galatians 6:14— "But far be it from me to boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world."

3. Luke 9:23— "Then He said to them all: 'If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow Me.'"

4. 1 Peter 2:24— "He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and

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live for righteousness; by His wounds you have been healed."

5. John 19:18— "There they crucified Him, and with Him two others—one on either side, and Jesus in the middle."

These verses reveal the depth of God's love for us through the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. The cross is not merely a symbol of suffering—it is a sign of victory, salvation, and new life for all who believe

The Message of the Cross

The message of the Cross must remain the central theme of every preacher's proclamation. It is not merely a topic or theological concept—it is the very heart of the gospel, the divine message that transcends time, culture, and human opinion.[38] Though simple in its presentation, it is profoundly powerful in its impact.

At its core, the message of the Cross is a declaration of God's immense love, boundless forgiveness, and the redemption of fallen humanity. It speaks of a Savior who willingly bore the weight of our sins,[39] endured the wrath we deserved, and extended grace to those who least deserved it. Yet, it is also a message of justice, for on that Cross, sin was judged, righteousness was upheld, and the holiness of God was never compromised.

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[38] 1 Corinthians 2:2

[39] Isaiah 53:4–6

This is not a new message. It echoes from the ancient prophecies, flows through the pages of Scripture, and has thundered from pulpits throughout history. It is the message that has shaped lives, transformed nations, and comforted the brokenhearted. From the days of the apostles until now, its voice has not been silenced. And it never will be.

No power on earth or in hell can erase or suppress this message. It is sealed by the blood of Christ, protected by the authority of heaven,[40] and carried forward by the Spirit of God. It is not of human origin—it is divine. This is not a message born from the wisdom of the world; it is the very breath of God revealed in the gospel.

To preach anything less is to strip the gospel of its power. To replace it with the philosophies of men is to offer empty words to starving souls. The Cross is not a side note in our preaching—it is the very reason we preach.[41]

So let every preacher, teacher, and believer echo with boldness and clarity: the message of the Cross is the hope of the world, the glory of the Church, and the power of God unto salvation.

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[40] Matthew 28:18

[41] 1 Corinthians 9:16

Mirroring at the Cross

Who died on the Cross? It was Jesus—the only begotten Son of God. He did not die for Himself, nor for the angels, but for you and me. His death was a divine declaration from heaven, reaching out to lost humanity and offering something so strange, so foreign to our natural hearts: unconditional love and self-giving sacrifice.

This act should awaken in us a deep sense of awareness and sensitivity. Christ's offering of Himself on the Cross was not merely a historical event—it was the central moment of redemptive history, the heart of God fully displayed.

But more than just beholding Christ on the Cross, we are called to see ourselves there. Not as participants in the work of redemption—not as helpers or co-laborers trying to complete what He has already finished—but as recipients of that work. We are the products of His death:

- Forgiven by His blood
- Justified through His righteousness
- Blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places
- Filled with hope because of His resurrection
- Redeemed people of God, called to live in the light of that Cross

The Cross is not just a wooden structure, a tragic Roman instrument of execution, or a religious symbol as many consider it today. It is not an afterthought in God's

plan. Rather, it is the most profound demonstration of divine love the world has ever seen. It stands as the central mark of true Christianity—not as a badge we wear, but as the place where God dealt with our sin, crushed the head of the enemy, and opened the way to eternal life.

To mirror ourselves at the Cross is to see both the depth of our sin and the greater depth of God's grace. It humbles us, transforms us, and compels us to live—not to earn His love, but because we have already received it in full.

May we never lose sight of what was done there. And may our lives reflect the glory of the One who gave His all on that hill called Calvary.

A Decreed Message for Humanity

This is not just another religious idea. It is a decreed message—a divine proclamation spoken from eternity past, destined for the hearts of men. Let me draw out the very foundation of this overwhelming and mysterious drama—the greatest ever told in the history of mankind.

Its origin is not found in human longing or philosophical ideals. No, it began in the very bosom of God, deep within the heart of the Eternal One. From there, it was conceived and decreed—not as a reaction to human failure, but as a sovereign act of love and purpose. In time, this message of redemption took root

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and began to grow in the hearts of men whom God had chosen to reveal it to us.

This is not a man-made narrative, shaped by human hopes or limited to earthly wellbeing. It is not a mere ethical vision of restoring community or promoting human unity. Rather, this message is divine in origin, eternal in purpose, and redemptive in power. It was intentionally and purposefully decreed from the divine realm—an eternal plan that was set in motion long before the world began.

Its full weight and glory were revealed through the worth and work of the Son—Jesus Christ. He is the One appointed to suffer, to be executed, to die—not as a victim of circumstance, but as the Lamb chosen before the foundation of the world. As the prophet declared in Isaiah 53:10, "Yet it pleased the LORD to crush Him." These words are staggering. His death was not an accident, not a tragedy gone wrong. It was the deliberate will of the Father, the fulfillment of a divine decree.

Christ's sacrifice was not to satisfy our desires or to make us feel good. Rather, it was to make us vessels through which God would receive back all the glory. By acknowledging this truth and walking in obedience to His will, we become living testimonies of His sovereign grace.

This was no last-minute plan. It was ordained before time, sealed with an eternal covenant between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Its authenticity is not validated by human response, but by the divine initiative

that set it in motion. Its power is effectively manifested only in those whom He has chosen to reveal Himself to—those who have been called, justified, and sanctified for His glory.

Let us stand in awe of this decreed message—not just as hearers, but as those transformed by its reality, living daily in worship, gratitude, and reverence for the One who decreed it, fulfilled it, and now calls us into its light.

The Message of the Cross: Proclamation of Divine Justice

The message of the cross is not merely about love, compassion, or mercy—though these are gloriously present. At its core, it is the uncompromising proclamation of the justice of God, satisfied through the death of Jesus Christ. It declares that sin is not overlooked, but fully dealt with at Calvary. The cross is the divine altar where justice and mercy meet, not to cancel each other out, but to fulfill God's eternal purpose.

This message is not a fleeting emotional experience for those who believe. It is not simply a radical endeavor for social reform or a poetic call for peace among men. Rather, it is a heavenly contradiction to the philosophies of this world. The cross is not about temporary solutions, but eternal arrangements. It answers the deepest cry of the human soul—not for comfort or prosperity, but for a Redeemer. One who can reconcile us to God, redeem our

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ruined state, and secure our place in His everlasting kingdom.

The world, enamored by its own wisdom, has drifted far from God's majestic purpose. It clings to hollow dreams of peace and hope, fabricated by human effort yet void of eternal truth. It walks blindly, content with paths that lead nowhere, unable to grasp the seriousness of eternity. Without Christ, all efforts are temporary, all ambitions are fleeting, and all hope is without foundation.

But through the cross—through the perfect life and atoning death of Jesus—all blessings are bestowed for our sake. The eternal is made accessible. The holy is made near. And sinners are made sons.

This is the message we must proclaim: not just a symbol of love, but a declaration of divine justice, eternal hope, and sovereign grace.

Appealing to Hear: A Call to Eternal Perspective

In a world overflowing with noise, distractions, and endless pursuits—jobs, careers, businesses, achievements—many have become too occupied to pause and consider the most valuable and eternal pursuit: the pursuit of God. Our modern age thrives on what is fleeting, centering its energy on what is temporal, and yet these things offer no lasting value. People chase success, comfort, and leisure, but remain deaf to the most important voice—the voice of redemption.

This voice, calling from the message of the cross, is not a religious echo meant to be admired from afar. It is a divine call that convicts the heart, converts the soul, and transforms lives. It is a voice that draws us away from worldly fashions and selfish ambitions and redirects us toward the things of God—toward meaning, significance, and eternal truth.

But this can only happen when one listens—really listens—with attention and humility. When the message of the cross is heard not just with the ears but received with the heart, conviction is born, and from that conviction begins the journey of renewal and transformation. It becomes the turning point from a life centered on fleeting satisfaction to a life grounded in divine purpose.

This message does not echo the principles of the world that prioritize ease, pleasure, and applause. Rather, it teaches us to live not for self, but for the glory of God. And this reality becomes alive in us when we accept the message of the cross—not just intellectually, but practically—and live it out.

As Scripture says:

"The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever."

This is the true foundation of life—anchored not in the ever-changing pursuits of the world, but in the unshakable principles of heaven. It is a life that doesn't just chase meaning, but carries it.

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The Message of the Cross: Plain, Yet Rarely Heard

The message of the cross is undeniably clear. From the earliest days of the Church, it has been the central tenet of Christian faith—a message of salvation, a declaration of God's love, and a profound invitation to transformation. It was revealed through Scripture with simplicity and directness, freely offered to all, without hindrance and without delay. Yet, despite its clarity and its power, something has changed. Today, hearing the message of the cross from the pulpit has become increasingly rare, replaced by other enticing instructions. It often seems that the labor and effort once devoted to proclaiming the true wisdom of God have diminished, as the Church shifts its focus to other issues. The cross has become, in many cases, little more than a concept boxed away for use only when needed, rather than the living, breathing center of the Christian life.

This essay seeks to explore the question: Why has the message of the cross become so rare in modern pulpits? What has led to this dramatic shift, and who is ultimately to blame? Moreover, as the angels once proclaimed the gospel of salvation to the world, why is this message not being heard by many today?

In conclusion, we are not given the words of the cross merely to fill our minds with spiritual knowledge or lofty theology. Rather, we are entrusted with them so that we may grasp—deeply and clearly—the magnitude of what Christ has done. These words are meant to bring us to a place of genuine understanding and unshakable

assurance, grounded in the finished work of Jesus on the cross.

This moment—Christ's death on Calvary—is the most pivotal and awaited event in all of human history. It is the very moment when a Savior, perfect and sinless, was willingly nailed to the cross on our behalf. He bore the punishment we deserved, not because we were worthy, but because His love was greater than our sin. This is the truth we are called to embrace.

Therefore, in light of such overwhelming mercy and love, the only fitting response is full surrender. We are to offer our entire being—heart, soul, mind, and strength—as a living sacrifice in gratitude for what Christ has accomplished. In doing so, we begin to comprehend just how deep, how marvelous, and how incomprehensibly beautiful the message of heaven truly is, even for people as undeserving and filthy as we are.

Now the responsibility lies with us. It is our turn to demonstrate sincere faith and authentic love for Him—not to earn His favor, but because of the immeasurable grace He has already shown. After all the suffering, pain, and sacrifice He endured for us on the cross, there remains no excuse, no defense, and no hesitation on our part.

The message is definite. It is crystal clear. Let us live in the light of the cross, unwavering in devotion, with hearts ablaze in response to the greatest love story ever told.

But as children of the Most High God, who bear His name and represent His purpose, it is our solemn responsibility to guard, protect, and preserve the sacred essence of His truth—truth that has been faithfully proclaimed from the pulpit, Sunday after Sunday. These divine revelations are not simply teachings to be studied, but living truths to be embraced, exemplified, and passed on.

We are not merely students sitting at the feet of the Master; we are also recipients of His commission and stewards of His mysteries. By His grace, we have been given the honor of becoming teachers and messengers, entrusted with the spiritual blessings that bring light to others. Through our faithful witness, others too may be enlightened, turning their hearts toward the glorious kingdom that God has prepared for those who love Him.

This sacred duty is not given lightly. It is not meant for those who are newly born in the faith or for those who are just beginning their journey in the Christian life. Rather, it is entrusted to us—those whom God has called, matured, and prepared for this special assignment. We have been set apart for a purpose greater than ourselves: to proclaim His name, to stand firm in the truth, and to help others walk the narrow path that leads to life.

Therefore, let us not become a burden to those who are faithfully laboring in the proclamation of the gospel. Let us not hinder or weigh down the work of those who sow tirelessly. Instead, let us rise in unity and strength,

shoulder to shoulder, to help scatter the seeds of redemption. These seeds are destined to take root in the hearts of the chosen—those whom God, in His infinite mercy, has set apart for salvation.

Let us be faithful to our calling, not shrinking back in hesitation or comfort, but pressing forward with boldness, humility, and love. For in doing so, we not only fulfill the mission given to us but also reflect the very heart of the One who called us.

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CHAPTER FOUR

CHRIST WOVEN THROUGH EVERY WORD

The Beauty and Power of Christ-Centered Preaching

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The message of the Cross has already been made clear in the previous chapter—Christ crucified as the power and wisdom of God. But the glory of that message does not stand alone; it is inseparably tied to the Word that reveals it. Now, let us look deeper into how Christ Himself is inscribed in the Scriptures—not merely mentioned, but intricately and intentionally written into every line, every shadow, and every promise.

In this chapter, we trace how God, in His sovereign wisdom, formed and revealed His Son through the written Word. With divine precision and complete inerrancy, God authored a book that reveals a Person—Jesus Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, the Scriptures were not just written about Him; they were written through Him and for Him. Christ is not an afterthought in redemptive history—He is its center.

We will explore the mind of God as He prepared the revelation of His Son—how the eternal Word became flesh and was first witnessed in the prophetic Word. This chapter leads us to see that the Bible is not merely a book of moral guidance or historical records; it is a living testimony to the Lamb who was slain before the foundation of the world.

Let us now behold the wonder of a God who writes—not randomly, but redemptively. He formed His Son's portrait through the ink of the prophets, the melodies of the psalmists, the wisdom of the apostles, and the unfolding of covenant history—all with perfect unity and divine intention.

Christ Woven Through Every Word

The eternal purpose of God became reality—preserved and proclaimed through the written Word.

When God wants to create something, He does it simply by His will and power. He doesn't need help or tools. He speaks, and what He wants immediately comes into being. This shows how mighty and unlimited He is. His power is clearly seen in every part of creation.

But when it comes to revealing His Son, Jesus Christ, God worked not just in power, but with a plan that came from His heart—a plan full of purpose and mercy. When the Father spoke about Christ in advance, even long before Jesus was born, it was part of His perfect decision to rescue the world. This plan wasn't made up along the way; it was already in place, and it was filled with kindness we didn't deserve.

God made sure this plan was written down. Both the Old and New Testaments point to Jesus—not just as a good teacher or example—but as the very center of God's message. The Holy Spirit, who is fully God, worked through faithful people—prophets, poets, preachers, even mothers and kings—to write about Jesus. He guided them so that what they wrote wasn't just human thought, but truly God's word. Through their writings, Jesus becomes visible—not just as a historical figure, but as the living Savior we all need to know.

And Jesus wasn't revealed just to show us love and give us hope—though He certainly does that. More than

anything, His coming is about rescue. It's not only about healing wounds or giving us peace in our hearts. It's about saving us from the judgment we deserve because of sin. Jesus took our place. He died so that we don't have to. He was treated as guilty so we could be forgiven. This is not just an emotional story—this is the greatest truth: Jesus gave His life so that we could truly live.

Christ in Every Line: God's Inspired Script

Let us now open the Scriptures with reverence and desire, and behold Christ in every page—with hearts stirred not merely to understand, but to worship.[42] We are not just invited to read the Bible; we are called to encounter the living Christ through it. From Genesis to Revelation, Christ is not only present—He is central. O, how magnificent are all the works of God concerning Jesus, our Savior and Redeemer, our Lord and our God! He is not a shadow in the background of Scripture—He is the light that gives the entire Word its meaning and message.

Every page proclaims Him as holy, righteous, and just—the attributes that most perfectly reveal both the heart of God and the hope of man.[43] These are not abstract theological labels—they are the very truths that

[42] John Calvin, *Commentary on the Psalms, on the Sufficiency of Scripture in Revealing Christ*.

[43] Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, vol. 1, on the holiness and justice of Christ as the revelation of God's character.

awaken faith in the heart of the sinner. This faith is not self-generated but is God's gift, given through the hearing of His Word, so that we may be brought into His kingdom by grace and belong fully to Him. Christ is not one option among many—He is the only Redeemer, the spotless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. His perfection was not only moral but sacrificial. He bore our guilt, stood in our place, and satisfied the justice of God so that mercy could flow freely to undeserving sinners.

The testimony about Him in Scripture is not reserved for scholars or the learned. It is not meant only for those who know how to interpret languages or analyze texts. No, the Word of God is also for the ordinary, the lowly, the uneducated, and the broken. It is for the sinners whose hearts have been wounded by guilt and whose lives have been shattered by sin.[44] The story of Christ is not just readable—it is reachable. His truth does not appeal only to the mind but grips the whole being—the conscience, the affections, the will.

Every word written about Him is breathed out by God, fully inspired and secured by His sovereign hand. The Bible is not the product of human imagination or religious speculation. It is the very thought of heaven,

[44] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Christ in All the Scriptures,* Sermon Preached March 25, 1855.

made known on earth.[45]What we read about Christ is not shaped by culture, nor altered by time, nor polluted by man's ideas—it is truth from above. The Scriptures are not suggestions or spiritual poetry—they are the revelation of the eternal God, pointing to His eternal Son.

Thus, when we see Jesus in the Word, we do not merely learn about Him—we are drawn to trust Him, love Him, and submit to Him. We are not only informed, we are transformed. The Scriptures that reveal Christ are the means by which God brings dead hearts to life, and wandering souls back home. This is not just literature—it is life-giving revelation, because it leads us to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The Unveiling of the Mystery

The sacred mystery of Christ, once hidden, is progressively revealed through the inspired Scriptures.

The life of Christ is written with divine mystery, saturated with wonders and signs, and sovereignly administered by God the Father for the fulfillment of His eternal will—both upon His Son and for the sake of His people. From eternity past, the incarnation of the Son was not an afterthought but the unfolding of the Father's immutable decree (Acts 2:23; Eph. 1:4–5). The coming of Christ is not merely an historical event—it is the

[45] B. B. Warfield, *The Inspiration and Authority of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1948).

hinge of human history, the epicenter of divine intervention, and the climactic revelation of God's redemptive purpose. His advent transcends generational boundaries, social distinctions, and cultural divides. It is universally essential, for in Him alone is salvation found (Acts 4:12). Without Christ, humanity remains lost in temporal pursuits, weighed down by sin, futility, and death (Eph. 2:12). All else is fleeting, burdensome, and ultimately void of eternal hope.

Yet, the entirety of Christ's coming—His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exaltation—is governed by the sovereign hand of God, working all things according to the counsel of His will (Eph. 1:11). His purposes are often inscrutable, hidden from natural understanding because of our fallen condition. In our depravity, we are blind to the glory of Christ apart from divine illumination (2 Cor. 4:4–6). But through grace, God reveals to His elect the immeasurable richness of life in Christ, drawing us into the mystery now made manifest through the gospel (Col. 1:26–27).

The story of Christ is not like the world's tales that end in fading glory or emotional finality. The redemptive narrative of God is eternal—it does not conclude but unfolds everlastingly to the praise of His glory. The gospel is not simply an episode in history, but the eternal plan of God to unite all things in Christ (Eph. 1:10). Behind the profound mystery lies the very heart of God: love that gives, righteousness that satisfies, justice that condemns sin, and mercy that pardons the undeserving.

All of these attributes find their fullest and most radiant expression in the person and work of Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24–26).

In Christ, the incomprehensible becomes intimate, the holy touches the broken, and the eternal embraces the temporal—for our good and for God's glory.

The mystery of Christ's coming is one of the most profound revelations in all of redemptive history. God, in His sovereign wisdom, chose to veil the fullness of His redemptive plan in mystery—not to confuse or bewilder, but to reveal in due time the glory of His Son in a manner that exalts grace and humbles human pride. This divine mystery serves a holy purpose: to prepare hearts for the redemptive work of Christ, not through spectacle or worldly power, but through humility, mercy, and love. It is the chosen method of God, designed to confront our expectations and magnify His grace.

The mystery is not meant to obscure truth but to heighten its majesty. As Paul wrote, "great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). This incarnation—the eternal Word becoming flesh—is not fully grasped by the natural mind. It is the glorious paradox of deity clothed in humanity, power hidden in weakness, and the King arriving not with armies but in the form of a servant (Phil. 2:6–8).

In John chapter 1, this mystery unfolds with quiet yet divine force. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, declares His coming not with mystical language

or cryptic signs, but with humble proclamation: "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The declaration is simple, but the reality behind it is incomprehensible—God's eternal Son, the second Person of the Trinity, standing among sinners as their Savior. The One through whom all things were made comes not to judge but to redeem, not in majesty but in meekness.

This, indeed, is the wonder that surpasses all Old and New Testament records: the divine entering human history in lowliness. The One who dwells in unapproachable light comes near, not cloaked in thunder or fire, but with mercy and compassion, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). It is this breathtaking mystery that evokes the remarkable response from John the Baptist: "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30). This is more than a statement of humility—it is a profound act of worship. It reveals the heart of one who has glimpsed the mystery of Christ and bows before it in adoration.

The mystery of His coming overturns all human expectation. The Messiah was anticipated with visions of political deliverance and earthly might, yet He appeared in poverty, embraced the despised, and moved toward the cross. This paradox is not a flaw in God's plan—it is its very glory. For in this mystery, the true character of God is made visible: love that stoops, justice that does not compromise, and mercy that endures forever. The mystery invites us, not to speculation, but to surrender. It

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draws us not into confusion, but into worship. And it compels every redeemed heart to echo John's cry: He must increase, I must decrease.

The Guarded Word

God has not only given us His Word and made it manifest through history, but He has also sovereignly and supernaturally preserved it—ensuring its purity, authority, and truthfulness across all generations. This divine protection is not accidental nor merely providential in a general sense; it is intentional and rooted in the very nature of God's redemptive purpose. As Jesus declared, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away" (Matt. 24:35). The Scriptures remain unbroken, uncorrupted, and enduring—not because of human effort, but because of divine preservation under the watchful hand of the triune God.

When we examine the unfolding of God's revelation, we see that He chose to make His Son known not through flashy displays or philosophical speculation, but through holy mystery—veiled yet revealed, majestic yet humble. Every word, every line, every leaf of Scripture is not merely historical text or theological insight—it is decreed and executed by the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Spirit. All of Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim. 3:16), and its ultimate focus is the unveiling of Christ—His person, His work, and His glory. Christ is the thread that runs through the

tapestry of redemptive history, and the Scriptures are the divine record of that unveiling.

Therefore, in connection to our preaching ministry, the seriousness of this divine preservation demands our highest reverence and vigilance. If God Himself has guarded His Word with unbreakable resolve, should not we—those entrusted with proclaiming it—do likewise? Every preacher, teacher, and expositor of the Word must approach the task with trembling responsibility. We are not innovators of truth but stewards of revelation (1 Cor. 4:1). We are called to "rightly handle the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15), not twist it, dilute it, or misuse it for personal agenda or popular approval.

In our time, preaching is indeed widespread. Platforms are many, and voices abound. Yet the tragedy is that much of what passes as preaching lacks the weight of divine truth. Messages often cater to felt needs or emotional uplift while neglecting the centrality of Christ and the authority of Scripture. This is dangerous. When preaching is done carelessly, or without anchoring in sound doctrine, we risk leading people not toward life, but into greater confusion, and potentially, destruction.

From ancient times until now, God has placed His unchanging seal upon His Word. His Word is not to be tampered with, altered, or reshaped—it is to be proclaimed, protected, and obeyed. Our calling, then, is not to impress but to be faithful; not to entertain but to proclaim the truth with clarity, humility, and boldness. We must guard the Word, not merely as scholars or

preachers, but as those who have been entrusted with a sacred charge from God Himself.

Let us, therefore, take our place among the long line of faithful witnesses who trembled at His Word (Isa. 66:2), rightly divided it, and proclaimed it for the glory of Christ. For in doing so, we not only protect the purity of Scripture—we participate in the unfolding of God's redemptive plan through the proclamation of His Son.

Living and Active: The Transforming Power of Scripture

This written Word does not return void—it pierces hearts, shapes lives, and leads sinners to the Savior.

Regeneration is the most astounding and spiritually transformative result of the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. It is the moment when spiritual death gives way to life, when darkness is shattered by divine light, and when a sinner is awakened to the glory of Christ. This is not a mere change of behavior or a shift in mindset—it is the supernatural re-creation of the soul. The hardest heart, the most rebellious criminal, the proudest self-righteous person—none are beyond the reach of God's sovereign grace. When God wills to save, nothing can stand in His way. This is the miracle of regeneration: the dead heart made alive in Christ.

From all eternity, regeneration has been included in the grand scope of God's redemptive will. It is not a secondary or optional event—it is central to the

application of salvation. God does not overlook or bypass any individual according to arbitrary status or moral record. Rather, His electing grace reaches across all nations, all classes, all backgrounds. The scope of God's saving intention is universal in its reach, though particular in its application—He has a definite people whom He has chosen to save (Eph. 1:4–5), and through His Word and Spirit, they are called, awakened, and brought to life. The Word of God goes out as the external call, inviting all to repentance, but not all respond rightly. Some hear and harden, some receive with joy and fall away—but when the Holy Spirit works through the effectual call, the heart cannot resist. The same Word that once fell on deaf ears becomes, by the Spirit's power, a life-giving sword (Heb. 4:12).

This effectual calling is not superficial, nor does it consist of emotional persuasion or eloquent speech. It is not the kind of "call" that appeals to human comfort or self-improvement. Rather, it is the divine summons that brings a sinner to repentance and faith—a call that breaks pride, exposes sin, and reveals Christ as all in all. It is the work of the Spirit alone to make the Word effective, applying it with irresistible force to the soul, so that the one who was spiritually dead is now alive unto God (John 3:5–8; Titus 3:5).

False calls abound in our time—man-centered messages that offer superficial change without repentance, salvation without sanctification, and promises without Christ. These calls are not ordained by

God, nor rooted in Scripture. They may stir emotions, but they do not regenerate hearts. They may build crowds, but they do not build the Church. Only the Spirit of God, working through the true gospel, can bring about genuine regeneration.

And why is all this done? Not so that man may boast, but so that Christ may be praised. Regeneration is centered upon the glory of Christ—the exaltation of His grace, the sufficiency of His atonement, and the power of His resurrection. When a soul is born again, it becomes a living testimony to the supremacy of Christ in salvation. As Paul wrote, "It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8). The regenerated life is not merely a recipient of grace—it becomes a showcase of grace, reflecting the glory of Christ forever.

Therefore, let us marvel at this miracle of grace. Let us preach the Word boldly, trusting that the Spirit will apply it according to God's sovereign will. For every soul brought to life through regeneration is a trophy of Christ's victory and a song of praise to the God who makes dead men live.

John Flavel: Preaching Christ in the Midst of Persecution

Among the shining lights of Christ-centered preaching in church history, John Flavel (1627–1691) stands as a faithful and courageous example. As a Puritan minister in England, Flavel devoted his life to

preaching Christ crucified, believing that the heart of every sermon must exalt the Savior and lead the soul to worship Him.

Faithful Under Fire

Flavel ministered during a time of severe persecution. In 1662, the Act of Uniformity expelled over 2,000 Puritan ministers from their pulpits, including Flavel.[46]Preaching outside the established Church of England became illegal, and faithful men like him were forced underground. But rather than silencing him, the threat only deepened his resolve. He continued to preach—in forests, barns, caves, and on the open seashore—whatever it took to proclaim Christ.

For Flavel, preaching was not about prestige or popularity. It was about making Christ known, even at the cost of his own safety. He once wrote, "The soul that sees not the beauty of Christ has never seen the glory of God."[47]

The Sermon in the Cave

One of the most remarkable events in Flavel's life took place during a secret gathering of believers in a

[46] For historical context on the Act of Uniformity and the ejection of Puritan ministers, see J. C. Ryle, Five English Reformers (Banner of Truth, 1981), 112–115.

[47] John Flavel, *The Fountain of Life Opened: A Display of Christ in His Essential and Mediatorial Glory* (London, 1671; reprint, Banner of Truth, 2004), 38.

cave near Dartmouth. Hidden from the authorities, in the cold and dark, believers gathered not for entertainment, but to hear the Word of God. Flavel stood before them and preached Christ—not with worldly eloquence, but with deep conviction, clarity, and reverence.

Among those listening was a young man, hardened and uninterested. He left the cave that day unmoved—but the sermon remained in his conscience. Eighty-five years later, on his deathbed, that same man—then over a century old—finally bowed to Christ, confessing that Flavel's sermon had never left him.[48]The Word, sown in weakness, had borne fruit in the power of the Spirit.

A Theology of Christ-Centered Preaching

Flavel's preaching was deeply theological and profoundly pastoral. He believed that:

- All of Scripture points to Christ, and any preaching that fails to do so misses the heart of the gospel.
- Preaching must aim not merely at the mind, but at the heart, bringing the soul into communion with Christ.
- The goal of preaching is not moral improvement, but spiritual regeneration—a supernatural work of the Spirit through the exaltation of the Son.

[48] Anecdotal account from John Flavel's ministry, recorded in Iain H. Murray, *The Puritan Hope: Revival and the Interpretation of Prophecy* (Banner of Truth, 1998), 57.

One of his most influential works, The Fountain of Life Opened, unfolds the person and work of Christ in rich theological depth—from His eternal glory, to His incarnation, atoning death, and resurrection.[49] Flavel never tired of pointing sinners and saints alike to the sufficiency, beauty, and necessity of Christ.

A Legacy for Preachers Today

John Flavel's life reminds us that true preaching is never about entertainment or applause. It is about faithfully heralding the glory of Christ, even if it costs everything. In times of persecution or peace, the preacher's task remains the same: to preach Christ, and Him crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2).

In an age filled with shallow messages and self-centered sermons, the example of Flavel shines brightly. His ministry testifies that where Christ is exalted, the Spirit works, lives are transformed, and the glory of God is revealed.

May today's preachers learn from this faithful servant, and echo his heartbeat:

"He must increase, I must decrease." (John 3:30)

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[49] See Flavel, *The Fountain of Life Opened*, throughout. Especially sermons 1–3 for Christ's divine person and sermons 10–15 for His mediatorial work.

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CHAPTER FIVE

WHERE THE GOSPEL IS PREACHED, LIFE BEGINS

The Transforming Power of Exalting Christ

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The Gospel as a Seed

In Mark 4:14, Jesus says, "The sower sows the word." This shows us that the gospel is like a seed. It's not just a nice idea or a religious message—it's the way God starts working in a person's heart.[50] All throughout the Bible, we see that salvation begins when the seed of the gospel is planted. It's not something vague or uncertain that ends in failure. No, it's real. It brings life. It brings us close to God and draws us into His presence through the power of the Holy Spirit, even though it's planted in our weak, sinful nature.

But we also need to understand that the work of the gospel—though planned by God from eternity—must be shown in real life through faith in Christ. And only in Christ. Every life that bears fruit for God starts with the gospel being planted in the heart. That seed grows, slowly but surely, and bears fruit in God's perfect timing. Our journey with the Lord begins the moment that seed takes root in us.

In the kingdom of God, the seed continues to be scattered—reaching different kinds of people, across cultures, across generations. That's how God fulfills His plan of salvation.[51]It may seem small or ordinary to some, but that seed has great power to change hearts and give new life.

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[50] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*.

[51] Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics*, vol. 4.

Even though the world may ignore or misunderstand the gospel, it remains precious and sacred in God's sight. Why? Because it involves the work of His Son and the Holy Spirit. It's not just a message—it's a part of God's plan to save people.

And for us who preach or share the gospel, we need to remember that the power doesn't come from us. We're just the messengers. It's God who gives conviction and brings people to faith. Our job is to speak the Word, to share it clearly and faithfully. Then we trust God to do the rest.

So we keep preaching, keep planting seeds. And we trust that, in His time, those seeds will grow—because the gospel always has the power to bring life when God is the one at work.

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Life Begins When the Gospel Is Preached

But not just because people hear it outwardly—life begins when the agents of change start to work: the external call through the preaching of the Word, and the internal call by the power of the Holy Spirit. These two come together, and when they do, hearts are changed, people are converted, and lives are transformed.[52]

This is not just a general influence or emotional response, it is the actual work of the Holy Spirit, using the Word of God as the instrument to carry out what God has already decided in eternity past: the decree of

[52] Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*.

election. When God calls His chosen ones, that call is not weak or uncertain, it is effectual. It brings about what He intended. It creates life where there was none.

All throughout Scripture, we see examples of this kind of call, not everyone hears it, but those whom God has chosen surely do. And when they do, they respond, not because they are better, wiser, or more willing, but because God gave them ears to hear and a heart to believe.

This is very different from the common idea today, that a person must first generate their own faith, and then God responds to it. That belief turns the gospel into a suggestion and places the burden of salvation on man's decision. But the Bible teaches the opposite: God moves first. He gives life through the preaching of the gospel, and faith comes as a result of that divine work, not before it.

The gospel is not just an invitation, it is power. Power that comes from God. Power that saves. And when God decides to save someone, He uses the gospel to do it. He sends it through the preacher, He opens the heart by His Spirit, and He brings that person to life. This is effectual calling, and it never fails.

The External Call of the Gospel Goes Out Through Preaching

One of the primary tools God uses in converting His chosen people is the preaching of His Word. Preaching is not merely a human act of speech or

persuasion—it is a divine ordinance. In it, God places a sacred mystery upon the proclamation of the gospel.[53]Though it may appear as plain speech to human ears, preaching carries with it a supernatural power to penetrate hearts and awaken the dead to life.

The power of preaching lies not in the eloquence of the messenger, but in the divine design that unites the Word, the Spirit, and the redemptive work of the Son. Through preaching, the eternal summons of God is issued, calling sinners to repentance and faith in Christ. And while the Word of God functions as an external means, capable of being resisted by human will, its efficacy is ultimately governed by the sovereign prerogative of God.

He may, in His wisdom and patience, allow His Word to be rejected temporarily, yet never in vain. For in the appointed time, the Spirit applies the Word effectually, bringing about conviction, repentance, and saving faith in those whom the Father has chosen.

Thus, the preaching of the Word stands as a crucial means of grace. It confronts the sinner, reveals the holiness of God, and magnifies the sufficiency of Christ. Though outwardly resistible, it becomes inwardly irresistible when God, by His Spirit, opens the heart and draws the sinner to Himself.

It is here that the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility meets—where the eternal purposes

[53] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers.*

of God unfold through the ordinary yet Spirit-empowered means of preaching.

And on our part as preachers, we are more than privileged to bear this sacred responsibility—for it is divine in origin and the highest calling among all vocations. To be entrusted with the proclamation of God's Word is not a matter of personal ambition or human achievement; it is a divine commission, grounded in the eternal purpose of God and executed through frail vessels for the glory of Christ.

Preaching, is the solemn duty of heralding the good news of salvation—the message of Christ crucified and risen. The preacher is called to faithfully declare the whole counsel of God, not according to human wisdom, but in submission to divine truth. Yet, even with such a weighty task, we recognize that our role has clear limitations.

We do not convict hearts; we do not regenerate souls; we do not cause spiritual life to spring forth. These are works that belong to God alone. Our calling is to proclaim the gospel faithfully, clearly, and simply—to set forth the message in such a way that it points entirely to Christ. The power to save does not lie in our eloquence or persuasive skills, but in the sovereign grace of God who works through His Word by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, preaching must be approached with humility and reverence. It reminds us that we are but instruments—conduits through which the Word of life is delivered. Whether or not people respond in repentance

and faith does not rest on our technique, but on the sovereign will of God. He alone opens blind eyes, softens hardened hearts, and grants saving faith. And yet, what a joy and holy honor it is to be used by Him in this way—to stand in the gap, to lift high the cross, and to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ, knowing that in His perfect time and by His irresistible grace, He will draw His people to Himself.

This is how regeneration takes place—it is not the result of man's will, effort, or cooperation, but entirely the work of the Holy Spirit who moves sovereignly and powerfully upon the human heart. Regeneration is the supernatural act of God whereby He imparts spiritual life to a sinner who is dead in trespasses and sins. It is the Spirit who awakens the heart, convicts of sin, stirs repentance, and grants the gift of faith to believe Christ. This is what Scripture refers to as the effectual calling—the moment when God's summons to salvation is not merely heard with the ears, but received in the heart with power and transformation. It is also known as irresistible grace, for when God calls His elect inwardly by the Spirit, they will surely come.

Regeneration is a one-hundred-percent work of God. It is not a cooperative effort between man and God. Fallen humanity, being totally depraved, is spiritually blind, deaf, and dead—incapable of seeking God or choosing Him on their own. Therefore, apart from divine intervention, salvation would be impossible.

But in regeneration, God breathes life into the spiritually dead. The heart of stone is replaced with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). The will, once enslaved to sin, is set free to embrace Christ. This miraculous work results in the new birth, or what Jesus calls being "born again." And only those who are born again will see and enter the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). This new birth does not come by the will of man, "but of God" (John 1:13).

In this divine work, the finished work of Christ is applied to the individual. His perfect life and substitutionary death meet every condition that God's righteousness demands—not in the part of man, but in the person and work of Jesus. Through His life, Christ fulfilled the law in our place. Through His death, He bore the wrath of God for our sins. This is the very core of redemption: not what we do, but what Christ has already done. Regeneration simply makes us recipients of that grace—united to Christ by the Spirit, justified by faith, and freed from condemnation. As Paul triumphantly declares, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

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The Internal Call—the One that Brings Life—Is Done by the Holy Spirit.

This vital doctrine is often forgotten, overlooked, or tragically misunderstood in much of modern Christian teaching. In fact, many believers have never been clearly

taught the biblical truth concerning the sovereign work of the Holy Spirit in salvation. Instead, what prevails in the minds of many is a view that reduces the Spirit's work to a mere influence that can be either accepted or rejected by the will of man. They imagine that the Holy Spirit is always striving with sinners, but ultimately subject to human permission—as if God Himself must wait upon man's decision to act.

But this is not the testimony of Scripture. Nowhere in the Old or New Testament is the Spirit of God portrayed as being at the mercy of man's desires or choices. On the contrary, the Holy Spirit is revealed throughout redemptive history as the powerful and sovereign agent of God's will. From creation to regeneration, from prophecy to Pentecost, His power is never thwarted nor His purpose frustrated. When He moves, He accomplishes what He intends. When He calls, those whom He calls are made willing. As Psalm 115:3 declares, "Our God is in the heavens; He does all that He pleases."

This truth should cause us to tremble in reverent awe. To truly perceive the work of the Holy Spirit is to come face to face with the active presence of the Almighty. He is not a passive force or an optional helper—we are dealing with the very breath of God who gives life to the dead and shines light into the darkness of human hearts. His work is mysterious, effectual, and unstoppable when it is His will to save.

In the same way, our own conversion was not the result of our own pursuit of God or an internal moral awakening. It was the sovereign will of God that the Spirit would apply the finished work of Christ to our hearts at the appointed time. When we were still dead in sin, He gave us life. When we were blind to the beauty of Christ, He opened our eyes. When our hearts were hardened, He made them tender and receptive to the gospel. This is not because we chose Him, but because He first chose us—and in choosing us, He sent the Spirit to accomplish what no human will ever could: a new birth, a new heart, and a new life in union with Christ.

The Mystery of the Gospel Is Still a Mystery

I find myself reflecting deeply on the gospel—the gospel that God Himself has given to us. One question keeps stirring in my heart: Why did God choose this particular gospel as His divine initiative for our redemption? Among all possible ways, why this? What is it about the gospel that draws us so powerfully, so irresistibly?

Of course, the common and central answer is Jesus Christ. He is the heart of the gospel. But I am led to ponder even more—what is it in the mind of God about His Son that we have yet to grasp? Though the Scriptures provide a full and sufficient revelation of Christ, there remains a mystery—an infinite depth—that our eyes still cannot fully perceive. We behold Him

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dimly, even as we are daily being conformed to His image.

This mystery is not due to any lack in the Scriptures, but rather in our creaturely limitations. Even the most brilliant theologians, with all their learning and precision, cannot exhaust the glories of Christ. The deepest longings of our hearts—those silent questions we often carry—cannot be fully answered by mere intellect or theological systems. No matter how saturated a person may be with Scripture, there is a sacred obscurity that humbles us before the throne of grace.

The Apostle Paul himself declared, "Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!" (Romans 11:33). We are standing before a reality so glorious, so profound, that even eternity will not be long enough to fully comprehend it.

As Paul Washer once said, even in heaven, we will not exhaust the fullness of the gospel of God. The gospel is not merely a message for sinners to be saved; it is a revelation of the mind of God concerning His Son, and that is a mystery that eternity itself will continue to unfold.

So I ask again: what must we seek to know about Jesus Christ—not just from our limited human perspectives, but from the perspective of the Father? How does God see His Son? What is it about Christ that made Him the chosen One—the Lamb slain before the

foundation of the world, the exact imprint of the Father's nature, the radiance of His glory?

These are not questions that aim to promote speculation, but adoration. They lead us to worship, not merely to understand. For in the end, the gospel is not just about information—it is about revelation, transformation, and communion with the One who gave His Son that we might live.

Life Is Not a Product of Simplicity but of Mystery and Wonder

This mystery that accompanies us through God's sovereign grace is not a burden, but a gift—an open door into the very presence of God and a foretaste of heaven. It is not simply a concept to be grasped, but a reality to be worshiped. It is the first move of God in the drama of our salvation—a divine initiative that reaches down to us when we were utterly incapable of reaching up to Him.

If there were no mystery in the redemptive work of God—if everything could be neatly explained, measured, and reduced to human logic—we would be left with a gospel that is weak, shallow, and devoid of divine power. A salvation that is entirely comprehensible is a salvation stripped of glory. It would be no more than a human invention: plain at best, empty at worst.

But the presence of mystery—the kind that stirs awe and humility—is essential. It points us to something far greater than ourselves. It reveals that salvation is not born out of human effort or understanding, but out of the

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unsearchable wisdom and sovereign grace of God. Mystery, then, is not an obstacle to faith; it is the very foundation of our regeneration and transformation.

In this mystery, God secures our hope. He anchors our souls not in what we can fully comprehend, but in who He is—in His character, in His promises, in His revealed yet unfathomable plan. We are called not to figure everything out, but to trust and believe. And in that trust, we are changed.

Without God's action, enveloped in holy mystery, everything becomes meaningless. Life loses its weight. The call for a Redeemer becomes optional rather than urgent. But because God has acted in sovereign grace—with mystery and majesty intertwined—the need for a Savior becomes undeniable, and the gift of salvation becomes wondrous.

We are not conceived spiritually through something ordinary or natural. We are born again through wonder—through a divine work that causes angels to marvel and saints to fall on their knees. We are not saved by plain things, but by the mystery of the cross, the wonder of the empty tomb, and the eternal plan of God hidden for ages but now revealed in Christ. And even now, that same mystery is what fuels our worship, sustains our faith, and draws us deeper into the heart of God.

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This Life Is Sustained by His Gospel

We are not only amazed at how God has sovereignly orchestrated our salvation, but we are also in awe of the glorious outcome it produces in our lives. The process of redemption is not simply about rescuing us from sin, but about transforming us entirely for His eternal purpose. God's intention in converting us spiritually is not limited to a momentary experience or emotional turning point — it is an eternal reality that reaches into every part of who we are and what we are becoming in Christ.

God is deeply concerned with the outcome of His redemptive work in us. He does not simply begin the work and leave us to figure it out. Rather, He graciously provides things necessary: the means, the guidance, the Spirit, and the Word, so that we might grow into the full stature of His intention. His goal is not merely to save, but to sanctify, glorify, and conform us to the image of His beloved Son.

Time and again, it is through the gospel, and only the gospel, that life is sustained in us. It is never because of any merit, effort, or righteousness of our own. The life we now live, we live by faith in the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself for us. The gospel is not just the starting point of our salvation, but its very heartbeat from beginning to end.

Spirit Regenerates Life in Recorded in Both Testaments

Just as in the Old Testament, life from the dead is not brought about by a mere natural process, but through the sovereign, miraculous work of God. While there is no such thing as a "simple" act of God, for every work of His is marvelous and full of divine power, the act of giving life, especially from a state of death, is particularly a display of His sovereign grace and omnipotent will. The vision in Ezekiel where dry bones are brought back to life (Ezekiel 37) powerfully illustrates that resurrection life is not a product of human effort, nor even a natural extension of creation, but an act of divine initiative through the Spirit. The bones live only when the breath of God, the Spirit, comes upon them.

Furthermore, God's power to create, restore, and regenerate has always been ordained from eternity and operates consistently across both covenants (Ezekiel 36:26–27).

This promise is a vivid picture of regeneration, the inward transformation initiated by God alone. It prefigures the New Testament reality of being born again by the Spirit. The change from a heart of stone to a heart of flesh is not simply symbolic; it is the very essence of spiritual rebirth, even as it was prophesied under the Old Covenant.

The continuity between the Old and New Testaments regarding regeneration is clear: both testify

to the same divine work of bringing the dead to life, spiritually speaking. There is no theological disconnect — the gospel preached in the New Testament is the fulfillment of the promises made in the Old. Just as the Spirit gave life to dry bones, so now, through the preaching of the gospel, sinners are raised from spiritual death and brought into the life of Christ. Regeneration has always been by grace, through the Spirit, for the glory of God.

In connection with this, true life begins through the hearing of the Gospel and by the power of the Gospel itself. It is not by mere moral improvement or external change, but by the sovereign work of God that life is produced in a heart once spiritually dead. The Word of God, when empowered by the Holy Spirit, brings about new birth—a resurrection from spiritual death into the life that is in Christ Jesus.

This life is not fragile or temporary. It is a life that is secured by the righteousness of Christ, preserved by the hand of God, and ultimately used for the glory of His Son. It is not our doing but His mercy, not our striving but His grace. Through the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, we are brought into the kingdom of God — not as guests, but as sons and daughters, born of the Spirit. That is the highest privilege: to be born from above.

In this new life, we begin to behold not only the beauty of Christ but the majesty of His redemption and the depth of the gospel's mystery. It is a mystery that

transcends human explanation, a divine reality that is wondrously witnessed and marvelously experienced by those who are made alive in Him. The Gospel is not simply a message to be understood intellectually; it is a power to be encountered, a glory to be embraced, and a life to be lived.

And so, our gratitude is anchored in the Lord. We do not boast in ourselves, for we were once dead, but now we live — alive in Christ by grace alone.

Yet many, tragically, remain blind to this truth. They mistake biological existence for true life. They value only what this world can offer, blind to the eternal journey of communion with the Lord. But life, real, eternal life is not accidental. It is the result of God's eternal decree, designed for the supreme purpose of glorifying His Son.

From beginning to end, this life is Christ-shaped and Christ-secured. He has made us alive, not just to exist, but to be prepared for eternity. He has set His love upon us, breathed His life into us, and destined us for everlasting fellowship with Him.

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CHAPTER SIX

OUR CALL: FAITHFULNESS IN A CHANGING WORLD

Remaining True to Christ Amid Cultural Drift

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After God brings forth spiritual life through the proclamation of the gospel, it becomes essential for us to reflect on the divine calling that He has placed upon our lives. This calling is not a vague or general invitation—it is a holy summons, a sacred commission entrusted to those whom God has made alive in Christ. As men of God, we are called to live in such a way that distinctly and unwaveringly proves that our calling is not rooted in personal ambition or worldly affirmation, but in the faithful proclamation of the Word of God.

In a world that is increasingly drifting away from the truth of Scripture, embracing confusion over clarity and rebellion over submission, our responsibility becomes even more vital. We are not merely called to speak about Christ; we are called to make Him known as the very center and content of our message. The glory of Christ must be the driving passion of our ministry. His supremacy, His sufficiency, and His saving power must saturate our preaching, our teaching, and our lives.

This calling demands more than occasional faithfulness; it calls for a lifelong commitment. We are to remain steadfast, holding fast to the truth, faithful until the end, resisting compromise even when it is easier to conform. Our loyalty must be directed to our Savior, not merely in word but in practice, in attitude, and in sacrifice. This is not simply a task we perform—it is a vocation we embody.

In this chapter, we will take a deeper look into this divine calling—not as an abstract idea, but as a vital and

integral part of what it means to proclaim the gospel of Christ. To understand our mission rightly, we must first understand the One who calls, the message we proclaim, and the enduring purpose for which we are sent.

Our Sacred Calling

God has called us into a ministry that exalts the name of Jesus Christ in the midst of a world that is lost, blind, and alienated from its very Creator. This divine calling is not merely a human aspiration or religious duty; it is a sacred commissioning from heaven itself. Through this calling, the mystery and message of the gospel are made accessible to a fallen world. It is through the faithful proclamation of this calling that people are able to hear the very words of God—words that pierce the heart, awaken the conscience, and reveal both the guilt of sin and the grace of salvation.

Where once there was silence and ignorance, now there is a voice—a herald of truth empowered by the Spirit. This voice, proclaiming Christ, brings conviction of sin, creates spiritual awakening, and unfolds the redemptive plan of God. It is through this sacred calling that sinners come to understand the way of salvation: not by human effort, nor by philosophical reasoning, but by the power of God revealed in the gospel of His Son.

This calling is sacred precisely because it originates not from man, but from God Himself. It is ordained from above, woven into the eternal purpose of God to manifest His definite and unchanging plan of

salvation. This plan is not one of many options; it is the only way for the redemption of God's people. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12), and there is no other means through which this salvation is to be made known except through the proclamation of the gospel.

Within the divine economy of redemption, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are actively involved. God the Father is the Architect of salvation, who from eternity past chose a people for Himself. God the Son, Jesus Christ, is the Redeemer who accomplished salvation through His death and resurrection. God the Holy Spirit is the Applier of this salvation, regenerating hearts and opening blind eyes to behold the beauty of Christ. And remarkably, in this glorious plan, God has chosen to use human instruments—redeemed yet still frail men—to declare this gospel and carry out His mission.

Therefore, this calling is not only sacred, it is sanctified—it has been set apart by God Himself for the highest purpose: to make known His saving grace through the person and work of Jesus Christ. To be called into this ministry is to participate in God's eternal redemptive plan. It is a weighty privilege, a holy responsibility, and a sacred trust that must be carried with reverence, faithfulness, and unwavering devotion to the glory of Christ

.

A Call Beyond the Ordinary

There are many who are called, yet only a few are chosen. These words from our Lord Jesus (Matthew 22:14) are weighty and often cause confusion among believers, especially as we strive to walk in obedience to God. What does it mean to be called? And how does it differ from being chosen? Is there a distinction between the two?

Indeed, there is. And understanding this distinction is vital to rightly discerning our place in God's redemptive plan.

When Scripture speaks of the "call," it can refer to what we often understand as the general call or external call—a calling that goes out through the preaching of the Word, the offer of the gospel to all who hear. This call is gracious and real; it comes with the proclamation of salvation and the invitation to believe in Christ. In a sense, it is a common grace that all the elect experience at some point, and many non-elect hear as well.

But not all who are called respond in faith. This is the tragedy of the general call—many hear, but few respond with true belief. Many walk for a while, only to fall away. Some enter the vineyard but are not equipped to labor. Others begin with enthusiasm, yet grow cold, careless, or even forget the very commitments they once made before the Lord.

The chosen, however, are those whom God has not only called externally but called effectually—they are the ones in whom the Holy Spirit works powerfully,

drawing them irresistibly to Christ. This is not a mere invitation; it is a divine appointment. Being chosen means being set apart for a special task, a holy purpose, an eternal mission—initiated, sustained, and completed by God Himself.

This calling is not merely about a job or earthly vocation. It is not just about preaching, teaching, or ministry in the common sense. Rather, it is a sacred entrustment—a calling into a specific ministry where the Word of God must be heard, proclaimed, and lived out. It is often urgent, not because of time alone, but because of eternity. God is not constrained by time, yet His calling carries the weight of eternal purpose and sovereign intention. When He calls someone in this way, it is because He is appointing them to manifest His kingdom and bring glory to His Son.

To be called, then, is a gracious beginning. But to be chosen is to be gripped by God for a divine work, to be shaped, equipped, and sustained by His power. Many are called externally, but only the chosen are transformed inwardly.

Thus, we must not treat the call lightly. We must examine our hearts, asking: Have I merely heard the call? Or have I been chosen by God and set apart for His eternal purpose? The difference lies not in our own strength or wisdom, but in the sovereign grace of God. And it is this grace that enables us to persevere, to labor in His vineyard, and to glorify Christ until the end.

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A Call Defined by the Word of God

This sacred calling is not a vague impression or a product of mere religious fervor—it is clearly defined according to the measure of God's Word. It is definite in its essence, rooted in divine initiative, and revealed in Scripture with clarity and weight. It is not shaped by emotions or driven by ambition, but grounded in the eternal counsel of God and centered on the glory of Christ.

In a world filled with noise and countless voices claiming authority, many counterfeits of the call exist. Yet, the Bible gives us the means to discern the true from the false. How do we know a genuine call? By the intent and content of the proclamation. A true call is saturated with the gospel. Wherever the truly called man of God goes, the fragrance of Christ follows. His life and lips breathe the gospel, and his message bears the unmistakable mark of obedient allegiance to Jesus Christ.

He does not preach himself, his success, or his ministry—he preaches Christ crucified. His calling becomes evident because his mouth is filled not with speculation, but with the redemptive work of Christ. He does not simply speak about God—he magnifies the Son, exalts the cross, and heralds the grace that saves. This kind of ministry is unmistakable. It may not be popular, but it is clear. It cannot be confused or counterfeited for long, for its power is not in the

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personality of the preacher but in the purity of the gospel proclaimed.

Many today claim to be preachers. They are sincere, some even passionate. But passion without truth is dangerous. Some are devoted in speech but deficient in gospel understanding. They speak frequently of moral values, success, even Scripture—but they never exalt Christ as the all-sufficient Savior. They avoid the offense of the cross. They preach religion without redemption, motivation without the Mediator. And in doing so, they reveal themselves not as faithful messengers, but as false heralds—even heretics—however sincere they may appear.

The Word of God gives us clear references to this divine call. In the New Testament, we see Christ Himself calling His disciples, saying, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19). His call was personal, purposeful, and powerful. In the Old Testament, we see God calling Jeremiah before he was formed in the womb (Jeremiah 1:5), calling Moses from the burning bush (Exodus 3), and commissioning Isaiah with a vision of His holiness and a mission to a rebellious people (Isaiah 6).

All of these point to one truth: true calling is grounded in the Word of God—it is God who initiates, defines, and directs it. The one who is truly called is one whose life is governed by the authority of Scripture and whose ministry is shaped by the glory of Christ. He does

not invent his calling; he receives it with trembling. He does not define his mission; he obeys it with reverence.

Let us then be careful, brothers, to test the call—not by the standards of men, but by the unchanging Word of God. And let us labor to be among those whose calling is not only genuine, but evident—marked by truth, driven by grace, and always exalting the name that is above every name: Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Cost and Weight of a God-Called Preacher

Being a preacher called by God is not an easy task, nor is it a glamorous profession. It is not a mere job—it is a divine commission that often costs both life and reputation for the sake of the gospel. The one who truly preaches Christ must be prepared to suffer as Christ did. He must be willing to lay down his comforts, his ambitions, and even his safety for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

Throughout history and even in our present time, many faithful preachers have been tormented, rejected, and persecuted, enduring severe trials simply for obeying the gospel of Christ. Some have been imprisoned, others exiled, and many have lost their lives—all because they chose to stand firm on the truth. And yet, on the other side of the spectrum, there are those who are celebrated and applauded, whose names become known far and wide, gaining platforms, praise, and influence. But whether the preacher is unknown and afflicted or visible and esteemed, the weight of the calling remains the

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same. He must be ready at all times to carry the cross, not just the pulpit.

So then, what defines the true significance of a preacher's life? What should we truly look for as he goes forth to proclaim the Word of God?

First, the call of a preacher must lead to peace and reconciliation—not man-made peace, but the peace that comes through the blood of Christ. He is a messenger of reconciliation between God and man (2 Corinthians 5:18–20), not merely a moral teacher or religious figure. The preacher's task is to announce the way back to God through the gospel of grace.

Second, the preacher's message should dive deep into the hearts of believers, producing not just temporary excitement but long-lasting transformation. His preaching must confront sin, awaken consciences, build moral integrity, and foster true spiritual enlightenment. He is not called to entertain the church, but to edify and sanctify it through the Word of God.

Third, in the life of the church, the preacher becomes a key figure. Not because of his personality, but because he is entrusted with the sacred duty of feeding God's flock. The health, strength, and spiritual vitality of the church greatly depend on his faithfulness to the gospel. A shallow preacher breeds a shallow church. But a Christ-exalting, Scripture-grounded preacher becomes an instrument for spiritual depth and maturity among God's people.

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There are many paths the preacher must walk—seasons of joy, sorrow, fruitfulness, and rejection. But every road he travels is lined with challenges, because his calling is no ordinary vocation. It is a sacred trust, and each part of it is shaped by the sovereign will of God.

This is why in the Old Testament, prophets were either applauded or persecuted—but always held accountable. Whether their message was one of judgment or comfort, they had to preach what God had given them, regardless of the response. The same is true for preachers today. He must not fear man. He must fear God. For the one who stands before men with God's Word must have first knelt before God in surrender and reverence.

In the end, the true preacher is not measured by his popularity, charisma, or achievements—but by his faithfulness to Christ, his devotion to the gospel, and his endurance in the face of trials. To be called is a privilege. But to be faithful in that calling—that is the true test of a man of God

A Life Set Apart for the Gospel, A Cry for Gospel Purity in a Postmodern Age

In this postmodern era, the influence of the world has subtly but powerfully infiltrated the very heart of the church—most especially within the evangelical movement.[54] The systems and values of the

[54] John Stott, *The Preacher's Portrait*.

world—those driven by pragmatism, entertainment, and self-centeredness—have been adopted by many churches as models for growth and stability. Rather than relying on the sanctifying power of the Word and the Spirit, many have turned to worldly strategies, measuring success not by faithfulness but by numbers, popularity, and cultural relevance.

Worship, once marked by reverence and awe before a holy God, is now often shaped by trends and performances, designed more to attract the unconverted than to glorify the crucified Christ. Sanctity has taken a backseat to spectacle. Even in the pulpit, the message of the cross is being neglected, or worse, replaced by messages that are motivational, shallow, or centered on man rather than God.

Many preachers—though perhaps sincere in their desire to reach people—have unknowingly drifted away from the heart of the gospel. In their zeal for impact and influence, they have lost their passion for Christ Himself. They preach success instead of surrender, happiness instead of holiness, and self-improvement instead of repentance and faith in Christ.

And yet—thanks be to God!—there remains a remnant, preserved by His grace and raised up for His glory. These are men and women who have not bowed to the systems of the age, but who stand firm upon the Word of God. They preach repentance boldly, proclaim Christ crucified unashamedly, and lift high the banner of

sovereign grace.[55]Through their lives and ministries, the clarity of the true gospel continues to shine in the darkness.

We desperately need such faithful preachers today. Not performers, not trend-followers, but heralds of truth. Preachers who weep over sin, who tremble before the Word, and who burn with a holy passion to make Christ known. Passion for Christ must be our highest pursuit—above church growth, above reputation, above popularity.

For too long, the church has tolerated a diluted gospel—rebranded to suit the consumer, stripped of its offense, and void of its power. But we must awaken. We must return. We must revolutionize our hearts, not with new strategies, but with old truth—with the true, unchanging, soul-saving gospel of Jesus Christ.[56]

Yes, many "gospels" are being preached today—but they are not the gospel at all (Galatians 1:6–9). They are polluted with human wisdom, watered down to appeal to the masses, and rebranded to avoid offense. But the true gospel is still the power of God unto salvation (Romans 1:16), and it is this gospel that we must proclaim, no matter the cost.

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[55] Charles H. Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students.*

[56] J. I. Packer, *Knowing God.*

The Reward: Temporal Sacrifice, Eternal Glory

Again, I must say that being called by God is the highest and most sacred privilege ever granted to a person. It is not merely a role or an assignment—it is a divine calling that sets us apart for a holy purpose: to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ in a world overflowing with noise, confusion, and deep-rooted unbelief.[57]

To be called into this kind of ministry is to live with the assurance that our labor in the Lord is never in vain. Whatever trials, sacrifices, or difficulties we endure for the sake of the gospel, we know that the Lord sees and remembers. He is faithful, and He will pour out blessing upon blessing to those who are called to preach Christ—not necessarily because of our eloquence, effort, or personal commitment, but because of our heartfelt obedience to the One who called us.

Let me make this abundantly clear: our calling must always be matched with our role. We cannot separate the two. It is one thing to be called, and another to live out that calling in faithful obedience. What then is our role? What is the weighty task entrusted to us as ministers of the Word? It is to stand for the truth.

This is our solemn and non-negotiable duty in the religious sphere. We must never, under any circumstance, lose Christ in our preaching. For to preach

[57] Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Preaching and Preachers.*

without Christ at the center is not just a minor oversight—it is a tragic failure in ministry. The absence of Christ in our messages is the absence of life, power, and hope. This is the most guarded responsibility of every faithful preacher: to exalt Christ, to proclaim Him, and to make Him clearly seen in every sermon.

In a time when so many religious groups are withering in doctrine and decaying in spiritual substance, it is often because the Fountain of Life—Jesus Christ Himself—is no longer found in their teaching. They have replaced the living Christ with motivational talks, man-centered theology, and empty rituals. And that is why our role is not merely to keep our sermons lively through dynamic words or clever ideas that entertain and appease people's desires.No. Our task is far more serious.

We are called to make the truth vibrant, especially in times when it is dimmed, distorted, or dismissed. Like the prophets of old—men such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel—we are not to cease from proclaiming the Word of God, regardless of how unpopular or offensive it may be to the culture. We must not water down the message to suit the crowd. Instead, we must declare it with clarity, conviction, and compassion—pointing always to Christ as the only hope of salvation and life.

Let us, then, stand firm for Christ. Let us shine as lights in the darkness, not so that people may be impressed with us, but so that they may see Christ clearly—the Savior who still calls sinners, strengthens

the weary, and sanctifies His church through the power of His Word.

This is our role. This is our calling. And we dare not fail to fulfill it.

A Changing World, an Unchanging Gospel

It is essential for us, especially in this age, to trace and examine the prevailing views of the world regarding the gospel. As we well know, the system of the world almost always runs in direct opposition to the principles of God's Word. That is why it becomes soberly important to discern the many ways people are subtly and openly drifting away from Christ. The tides of culture, entertainment, politics, and philosophy have become powerful tools that undermine the centrality of Christ, and this should deeply concern every true believer.

Currently, I am working on my new book entitled "A Crown Traded for Crowd: How the World Removes Christ from His Rightful Place." In this work, I emphasize how the vast majority of people no longer regard Christ as the most important figure to ever walk this earth. Though history has never seen a more loving, holy, and sacrificial life than that of Jesus Christ, He is continuously dismissed, ignored, or replaced by the world's obsession with fame, power, and self.

In my introduction, I stress how modern society fixates on stardom and worldly influence, causing even professing believers to abandon a vibrant trust in Christ.

This trend is not surprising, because we live in a world that constantly feeds our hearts with dreams, ambitions, and promises of success, often at the expense of truth and holiness. Yet it is deeply saddening to realize that the only true gateway to lasting joy and fulfillment is still through Christ and the gracious provision of the Lord.

Today, people are overly engaged in material pursuits, striving for wealth, recognition, or comfort—even if the path they're following is spiritually dangerous. They chase trends that bring temporary satisfaction, often without thinking of the eternal consequences. And it is not just about social trends—even the moral fabric of society is rapidly eroding. For instance, same-sex marriage, once unthinkable in the public moral conscience, is now not only accepted but celebrated, even though it openly contradicts the Word of God and dishonors the Creator who designed life and marriage for His glory.

Across media platforms and online spaces, people engage in endless discussions and debates, seeking the "essence" of life—yet doing so apart from the truth of Scripture. They pursue solutions and philosophies that offer pleasure and ease, but these are hollow paths that lead further from the source of true life—Jesus Christ.

Yet, despite all this, we should take comfort in this truth: the Lord has not left Himself without a witness in the world. His Word continues to go forth. He raises up preachers—sometimes with platforms, but often simple, unknown believers—faithful Christians who proclaim

the gospel and bear witness to the reality of Christ's kingdom, which is radically different from the values of the world.

The contrast between the crowns of the world and the crown of Christ must be made clear. One seeks applause; the other, the cross. One craves attention; the other calls for devotion. Our task is to show, through our words and lives, that Christ alone deserves the rightful place of glory—not the fleeting icons or ideologies of this passing world.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

UNTIL CHRIST BE FORMED IN US

Preaching that Molds Christlikeness in the Church

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One of the greatest aspirations we hold as the church is to live a life that is genuinely Christlike. This, however, is undeniably challenging. There is no easy or effortless path to conforming our lives to Christ, because our hearts are naturally inclined to seek our own pleasures, preferences, and comforts rather than to submit fully to the principles of His will. This struggle is not, however, an excuse to evade our responsibilities as Christians, nor is it a justification to stray from His precepts. What I mean is that there must be a willing surrender—a deliberate emptying of our own desires, ambitions, and self-centered inclinations—so that we may walk in a manner that pleases Him.

Christ Himself gives us a profound illustration of this in John 12:24: "Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." The principle is clear: growth, fruitfulness, and genuine life in Christ require death—death to self, death to pride, and death to our natural inclinations apart from Him. We are called to die to ourselves so that Christ may be formed in us. Until we crucify our flesh—our selfish impulses, our pursuit of worldly satisfaction—our lives remain disconnected from Him and alien to His kingdom.

Yet, our goal as Christians is not to attain perfection in ourselves, nor to maintain a flawless record before God at all times. God does not demand that we become perfect on our own. Instead, He has provided us with a pattern, a model, and a standard by which to

live—and that standard is Christ Himself. It is not simply about the way Christ fulfilled the law; rather, it is about the way He consistently obeyed the Father, walking in complete alignment with His will. This principle is not new. In the Old Testament, God established that the life of His people should ultimately be oriented around Him—His righteousness, His purposes, and ultimately, the coming Messiah. Though the Jewish people often failed to fully grasp this divine plan, God never altered His intention: Christ was to be the central figure around whom their lives were to be conformed.

In the same way, in our generation, countless people are enamored with themselves, flattering their own understanding, and centering their attention on self-interest rather than God's glory. Yet the call remains the same: to live not for ourselves, but for Christ; not to seek self-fulfillment, but to be transformed by His Spirit, aligning every thought, word, and action with the pattern of Christ. Only then can we bear fruit that glorifies God, touching lives far beyond our own, and fulfilling the true purpose for which we were created.

In all of these principles of the Lord, we are being led to grasp more clearly the divine pattern revealed in Christ. This pattern is not optional, nor is it secondary—it is essential for us as we walk through a world marked by misery, tragedy, and frustration. Left to ourselves, we will be crushed by the weight of sin, sorrow, and confusion, but in Christ we are given both a model and a means by which to live. Therefore, we must

cultivate a deep inclination of the heart, a burning desire to embrace Christ as the highest standard of life. To live any other way is to miss the very purpose for which God has called us.

This need is seen most vividly in the ministry of preaching. Far too often, people grow reluctant, discouraged, or even drift away from the faith, not necessarily because of their circumstances, but because they have not been brought face to face with the living Christ in the preaching of the Word. But when Christ Himself is set forth clearly, passionately, and faithfully as the center of the message, the hearts of hearers are stirred, and their faith is grounded not in themselves, but in the sufficiency of Christ.

When Christ is understood—not as an abstract idea, but as the living Son of God who died, rose, and reigns for His people—then men and women have the opportunity to truly experience Him. This experience is not shallow emotionalism, but the transforming reality of knowing Him, walking with Him, and living with a sense of divine purpose and eternal certainty. Life in Christ no longer feels like an unbearable burden, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light. Rather, life becomes marked by guidance, wisdom, and joy through the principles of God's Word.

Thus, to adapt and live according to Christ's teaching is not simply a noble goal—it is the highest aspiration of human existence. Nothing else compares. To live for Christ is to live in alignment with God's

eternal design, and to proclaim Christ is the most faithful service a minister can give to the church and to the world. Everything else fades, but Christ remains the foundation, the center, and the supreme standard by which all true life and ministry must be measured.

The Supreme Focus of Preaching Is Christ

In every aspect of the life of the church, preaching occupies a place of supreme importance. It is not a secondary activity or a mere tradition we inherited—it is the living fountain from which God's people draw truth, life, and direction. Preaching gathers the church into one faith, one confession, and one hope, because at its heart stands not the preacher, nor human wisdom, but Christ Himself. The pulpit's highest task is to unveil who Christ is—His person, His work, His glory—and to call us into a deeper experience of Him who motivates, challenges, and transforms our lives.

There is no other valid reason for preaching apart from Christ. From Genesis to Revelation, God has filled the Scriptures with countless testimonies pointing to His Son. The Law, the Prophets, the Psalms, and the Apostles speak with one voice: Christ is the center. In our time, we do not wait for Him to be revealed, for He has already come. He has been prophesied, has lived among us, and is now present with His church through the Spirit. In His Word we hear the principles of heaven; through His life we see the kingdom of God breaking into our world.

Therefore, in every fiber of our being and in every gathering of the church, Christ must be exalted as King—honored, worshiped, and lifted to the highest place. But when Christ is preached—faith is kindled, hope is renewed, and love abounds. He shines brighter than the sun, radiating light into the darkest places of our hearts. He is greater than all earthly powers, surpassing every wisdom and authority in this world. To proclaim Him is not merely the duty of the preacher; it is the very core of the church's existence.

The Preeminent Call: Preaching Christ

To truly conceive Christ in our hearts, we need faithful preachers who are passionately consumed with Him. Such a preacher does not fill the church with himself, nor with clever words, nor with entertaining ideas, but with Christ alone—until His presence fills every corner of the gathered people. When Christ is not the food we receive, and when our minds are not filled with His truth, He will not be truly known among us.

Our preeminent call—the highest and most urgent responsibility of the church—is to proclaim Jesus Christ. What a beautiful name it is, and what a glorious task entrusted to us. The greatest problem facing the church today is not the lack of numerical growth, nor the scarcity of programs and activities. Rather, the most pressing need is for the pure, undiluted preaching of Christ. Only when Christ is lifted up will the church be

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truly alive, and only then will believers grow in faith, holiness, and hope.

But such preaching will only arise when God raises individuals who carry a deep burden for the glory of Christ—men and women who are resolved to make Him known, whatever the cost. This is not a calling engraved merely on the hearts of preachers; it is also a burden that belongs to the whole body of Christ. Until Christ is formed in us, His truth must be faithfully proclaimed, shared, and lived out among God's people.

God, in His sovereignty, will never allow the truth about His Son to be buried or diminished. Christ will never be a "loser" in history. No force of man or scheme of the devil can silence Him. For the hand of God is actively working to make Christ known and exalted over the whole earth. His sovereign will cannot be thwarted, and His eternal plan unfolds according to His perfect timetable.

Therefore, the church must return again and again to its supreme calling: to preach Christ. Every sermon, every message, and every teaching must echo the glory of His name. For when Christ is proclaimed, God is magnified, the church is built up, and the world is confronted with the only hope of salvation.

Do Not Wander—Beware of the Pitfalls

In Christ we have been confirmed, secured, and given the greatest possession of all—the very Son of God who is our life, our hope, and our joy. He alone is

the true solution and the only key to our salvation and satisfaction. No treasure, no jewel, no earthly possession can ever compare to Him, for only Christ can fill the longing of the soul. "Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you" (Psalm 73:25).

Yet the enemy of our souls continually seeks to draw us away from Christ. If we wander from Him, we expose ourselves to spiritual dangers that can harm our faith and weaken our witness. Though God's hand preserves us for His glory, we must remain vigilant. The apostle Paul warns, "Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Here are some common pitfalls that threaten to lead us astray:

1. The Lure of Worldly Riches

The world tempts us with glittering wealth, fashion, and pleasures, making us believe that material abundance can give us true security. But in chasing riches, many abandon Christ. Jesus Himself warned, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul?" (Mark 8:36).

2. The Snare of Pride and Fame

Some place too much trust in themselves and delight in recognition and applause, until pride takes root and Christ is forgotten. James exhorts us, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6). Pride leads us away from dependence on Christ, making us

boast in our own strength rather than His.

3. The Distortion of the Truth

Others drift from Christ by reshaping Him to fit their own agenda—preaching Him as merely a moral example or life coach, but not as Savior and Lord. Paul warned the Galatians against "another gospel" (Galatians 1:6–7), reminding us that to minimize Christ is to lose the gospel itself.

4. The Loss of Perseverance

Still others begin well but fail to continue in their devotion to Christ. Trials, disappointments, or the cares of life slowly choke their commitment. Jesus spoke of such in the parable of the soils, where "the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful" (Matthew 13:22).

Therefore, we must take heed and guard our hearts. To wander from Christ is to lose our anchor, but to abide in Him is to find life. "Abide in me, and I in you… apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:4–5). God, in His sovereignty, keeps His people and will not allow His elect to ultimately be lost, yet the warnings remain real and necessary to keep us awake in our faith.

So let us stay near to Christ, treasuring Him above all things. Let us resist the lures of wealth, pride, false teaching, and complacency. And let us persevere until the end, for "the one who endures to the end will be saved" (Matthew 24:13).

Keep Proclaiming Christ Without Ceasing

The work of preaching is not ultimately dedicated to people, but to Christ Himself. It is the highest and most fulfilling task entrusted to the church, for through preaching, God is pleased to reveal His Son and call sinners to salvation. Preaching is not merely the expression of human thought and emotion, nor is it a platform for making a preacher's name known. Rather, it is God's chosen means of bringing people to Christ, awakening dead hearts, and building up His church. As Paul declared, "For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21).

But true preaching is not about style or aesthetic appeal; it is about a burning passion for Christ and His glory. Paul testified, "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Therefore, we must never stop proclaiming Christ and His cross. The message of the cross may appear foolish to the world, but to those who are being saved it is "the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). This is why preaching cannot be silenced, cannot be set aside, and cannot be replaced by anything else. Programs, strategies, or philosophies may have their place, but only the proclamation of Christ brings life.

Preaching is not seasonal, nor is it bound by human approval. It is a lifelong calling. Whether in times of

revival or in times of apathy, whether the preacher is celebrated or rejected, the message must continue. Paul exhorted Timothy, "Preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2).

The cross is not just a message for the beginning of the Christian life—it is the very heartbeat of the Christian walk. To stop preaching Christ is to starve the church, to rob the lost of hope, and to strip the gospel of its witness. But when Christ is faithfully proclaimed, lives are transformed, the church is strengthened, and God is glorified.

So let us keep proclaiming Christ without ceasing. For in the end, the preacher may fade, the church buildings may crumble, and the world may change—but the gospel of Christ will remain, for it is the eternal power of God unto salvation for everyone who believes (Romans 1:16).

Lead the Church Steadfastly to Christ

We need to be observant: the trend in many churches today is moving away from Christ rather than toward Him. This drift is often due to a lack of motivation and spiritual challenge among members to fix their eyes on Jesus, as clearly exhorted in Hebrews 12. The more we engage ourselves with things outside of Christ, the more easily we become allured by distractions and worldly pursuits.

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Ultimately, it is the pastor or church leader who bears a significant responsibility for this. When leaders fail to keep Christ at the center, the church drifts from its true purpose.

Let us therefore let go of worldly things that obscure Christ, and hold fast to Him, for He is our true motivation, our ultimate source of joy, and the only foundation for genuine spiritual life. Let Christ reign supreme in our hearts, our ministries, and our churches, so that every word, every action, and every gathering points others to Him.

This is our passion—to go forth and even to leave the church, if necessary, in pursuit of the excellency of Christ, no matter the circumstances. This reflects our commitment and our striving to grasp the deep truth of Christ. No other agenda should ever replace Him; no other desire should take precedence over the pursuit of God's will as fulfilled in Christ.

Though we may wander in different directions and face trials that seem to divert our path, ultimately we find that every step, every struggle, and every decision leads us closer to God's ultimate purpose. In this pursuit, Christ is not simply a part of our journey—He is the center, the goal, and the sustainer of all that we endeavor to accomplish for His glory.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

PROCLAIMING HIM UNTIL HE COMES

The Enduring Mission of the Pulpit in the Last Days

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He is Eternal, Christ remains steadfast and unchanging until the very end.

It is our sacred aim to lift up the name of Christ—not merely in isolated moments of convenience, but even in times of resistance, opposition, and persecution. His very nature as true God is vital to our proclamation, especially as it connects with His promised coming. The eternal quality of Christ—His unchanging divinity and sovereign power—is one of the central contents of our message.

Christ is preeminent in His being, above all creation, and this truth persuades us to continually and faithfully preach Him. The pulpit must never be reduced to human-centered agendas or empty inspirations; it must remain anchored in Christ alone. For it is He who demonstrates Himself to be the supreme Lord of all, and it is this conviction that drives our lifelong commitment to exalt Him.

On the last day, we shall see Him enthroned in majesty, receiving the worship that is due Him from every nation and every tongue. His deity must not be hidden, suppressed, or neglected. Instead, it must be boldly and clearly proclaimed, for the revelation of His deity is not optional—it is God's ordained truth that will be fully unveiled at the consummation of all things.

Therefore, let every sermon, every exhortation, and every proclamation lift up Christ, for He is our eternal King, our supreme God, and our coming Judge and Savior.

The world will continue to move on its own course—seeking pleasure, pursuing power, and exalting itself—but Christ will remain forever as our God who is worthy to be served, honored, and worshiped. No shifting trend, no cultural change, and no worldly pursuit can diminish His eternal glory. This truth calls us, as His people, to demonstrate unwavering faithfulness and loyalty to Him, knowing that in Christ alone we have absolute assurance, eternal security, and everlasting hope.

Because of this, we are entrusted with a holy responsibility: to confront every false belief and distorted image of Christ that arises in our time. The church must stand firm as the pillar and ground of truth, refusing to compromise or dilute the gospel. The pulpit, in particular, demands vigilant guarding, for it is often the most strategic place where deception seeks to creep in. False proclamations may appear convincing, eloquent, or even inspiring to human ears, but they subtly lead people away from the supremacy of Christ and into spiritual ruin.

Therefore, let us be watchful and discerning. Let us hold fast to the faithful proclamation of Christ crucified and risen, so that the pulpit will never be a platform for human glory but a sacred place where the majesty of Christ is lifted high. The world may drift in its own direction, but as for us, we will serve the Lord, worship Him alone, and proclaim His without compromise

Being dogmatic in Christ is not the same as being fanatical. To be dogmatic means to be firmly anchored in the unchanging truth of Christ, while fanaticism is often driven by blind emotion or human zeal. Our true interest is not in exalting ourselves or clinging to shallow passion, but in making sure that Christ's glory is always at the center of everything we do.

As we face challenges in our advocacy for Christ, our mission remains the same: to lift up His name and ensure that He is never sidelined. This is not merely an ideology or a worldview that we subscribe to—it is the direct outcome of genuine faith in Him. Our proclamation is not about abstract ideas but about the living reality of Christ who transforms lives. People must come to realize that the significance of His person is the very key to experiencing a full and abundant life in Him.

This is why Christian faith cannot be reduced to a weekly routine of attending worship every Sunday. Worship must not only be an external act, but an inward transformation, a heart being deeply affected by the presence and truth of Christ. What truly matters in the life of the church is that people come to discern Christ, to see Him in His majesty and grace. When this happens, the result is not passive attendance but a living fire within—hearts ignited with devotion to Him, lives reshaped by His power, and a community centered on His glory.

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In the end, the church is not defined by its programs, numbers, or activities, but by whether or not Christ is truly seen, known, and exalted in its midst. And when He is, the people of God will not only worship Him but will also be moved, transformed, and compelled to live for Him.

In contrast to the Christ-centered proclamation of the gospel, we realize that many people today come to church with an expectation: they want sermons that will merely "lift them up," encourage them, or give them positive energy to face the week ahead. At first glance, this may not seem wrong—encouragement and inspiration are good when they are grounded in Christ as the source and foundation. But the tragedy begins when people long for life's holiness, strength, and joy apart from Christ Himself.

This pursuit is nothing less than a deviation from biblical principles. The Scriptures never present holiness as something we achieve by human willpower or positive thinking—it is always the fruit of union with Christ and the work of the Spirit in us. Yet many in our day continue with a wrong motivation: they crave self-fulfillment, self-improvement, or emotional uplift without bowing to the supremacy of Christ. And what is worse, they may be strongly committed to this concept, defending it, promoting it, and even building churches around it.

But no matter how sincere the commitment, if it is detached from Christ, it is ultimately hollow. It produces

a religion that looks spiritual but is void of the gospel's power. Inspiration without Christ is temporary; holiness without Christ is impossible; hope without Christ is an illusion. Only when sermons are grounded in the person and work of Jesus can they truly give life, ignite holiness, and strengthen faith.

Thus, the church must resist the temptation to cater to human-centered desires and instead remain faithful to the proclamation of Christ crucified, risen, and coming again. Anything less may inspire people for a moment, but it will never lead them to salvation, sanctification, or eternal life.

As we bring this work to a close, let us remember that everything we do must be acceptable and pleasing to God. In these last days, many voices rise to proclaim Christ, yet not all proclaim the Christ revealed in Scripture. There are countless distortions—counterfeit christs presented to the world—who cannot save and who lead people astray. It is therefore our solemn duty, entrusted to us by God, to stand firm in proclaiming the true Christ of the Bible with clarity, faithfulness, and conviction.

We carry this responsibility not for our own honor, but for the glory of Christ, so that men and women may gain a right and biblical perspective in ordering their lives under His Lordship.

The day is coming when Christ will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. On that day, every faithful servant who proclaimed His Word with integrity

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will share in His reward. Yet beyond all future honor, our greatest joy even now is knowing that we have lived to please God in the sacred vocation He has entrusted to us on this earth. Preaching Christ faithfully is both our calling and our offering of worship to Him.

To Him, and to Him alone, belong all the glory, honor, and praise—forever and ever. Glory be to God the Father, and to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the true center of our message and the crown of our reward.

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About the Author

Firmly rooted in Reformed theology, Edgardo has devoted his life to upholding the sufficiency of Scripture and the supremacy of Christ in the church. Throughout his years in the pastorate, he was known for expository preaching marked by theological depth, pastoral warmth, and unwavering Christ-centeredness. Even in retirement, his burden remains strong: to call the pulpit back to Solus Christus—to proclaim Christ not as a footnote, but as the very substance of every sermon.

He is the author of Real Life in Christ: Exploring the Depths of God's Grace and Reformed Truth for Filipino Churches, both written to encourage believers and churches to return to the foundations of the gospel with renewed wonder and conviction. His latest book, Solus Christus: The Heart of True Preaching, is a passionate plea for preachers to recover Christ as the center of the message, the method, and the mission of gospel proclamation.

Edgardo holds a Bachelor of Ministry, a Master of Divinity, and a Master of Arts in Biblical Studies. These academic pursuits have deepened his understanding of the Scriptures, but it is his love for Christ and the church that has sustained his preaching and pastoral care over the years.

Though retired from active pastoral ministry, Edgardo continues to serve the church as a mentor to

young leaders, a voice for gospel clarity, and a faithful witness to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ.

Soli Deo Gloria

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Book Summary

In a generation where many pulpits have drifted into man-centered messages, motivational talks, or diluted theology, Solus Christus: The Heart of True Preaching is a clarion call back to the centrality of Christ in every sermon.

This book challenges pastors, preachers, and church leaders to examine the true foundation of their preaching. Rooted in Reformed theology and shaped by the spirit of the Reformation, it proclaims that preaching without Christ at the center is no true preaching at all. Christ is not merely an illustration or application—He is the message.

Through biblical exposition, historical reflection, and pastoral urgency, the book unfolds the dangers of Christless preaching and points toward a pulpit renewed by the glory of the gospel. It calls preachers to rise above worldly wisdom and return to the person and work of Jesus as the heartbeat of all proclamation.

Whether you are preparing to preach, leading a church, or simply hungry for deeper gospel truth, this book will reorient your heart to the supremacy of Christ in the ministry of the Word. Christ is not an optional focus—He is the very substance of faithful preaching.

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